

The COMMENTATOR

YEAR 75

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Student Plays with African Politics, Earns National Acclaim

By SAMMY STEINER

“You are the leader of an ethnically divided, war-torn nation, trying to pacify and rebuild it.” That is the basic premise behind *Peace-keeping, The Game*, the political science board game Michael Goon created over the past three years with Dr. Elizabeth Radziszewski. Goon has since brought his idea to fruition, and the paper accompanying the simulation has been listed as one

of the Top 10 Recently Downloaded Intrastate Conflict Papers on the Social Science Research Network. Its associated article has just been accepted for publication in the prestigious journal, *International Studies Perspectives*.

Michael presented his game at the 2010 American Political Science Association Annual Meeting and Exhibition in Washington, DC. The simulation has been incorporated into the syllabi of Political Science

courses of Yeshiva College, Stern College, Binghamton University, and Valparaiso University. Dr. Amy Atchison, who incorporated the game into her Intro. to International Relations course, said of the game, “My Intro to IR class played the game this week and loved it. They voted unanimously in favor of my incorporating the game into future courses.”

continues on page thirteen

New Vice Provost Schiffman Advances Undergraduate Synergy, Ideology

By EITAN ULMER

After 39 years at New York University, Dr. Lawrence H. Schiffman has come to Yeshiva University to take up the newly created position of Vice Provost. The Vice Provost will focus on the undergraduate education of Yeshiva University, specifically looking towards “restructuring the undergraduate colleges, creating a unified undergraduate faculty to establish more commonalities and synergies among disciplines at both the Wilf and Beren campuses,” as President Richard Joel said in a press release.

The goal is to maximize resources and create more advantages and opportunities for the students. The implementation of these changes and exactly what form they will take are still in the process of being decided. As Schiffman explains, “Change requires a lot of consultation and a lot of discussion, for two

reasons: one, so you that you don’t take away people’s rights, and two, because they have something to contribute.” With this principle in mind, Schiffman has created one draft that he has shared with the deans, and is waiting for a meeting with them to receive their input and share ideas. After that, he will seek the advice and opinions of a wider group of faculty.

One ingredient of this process will be the unification of the faculty across different institutions. Currently, each college has its own separate faculty. Faculty will benefit from increased contact with other experts in their fields and have a chance to grow intellectually and internally from the wider network of colleagues. Students will benefit from a larger pool of professors to choose from when selecting their courses.

There are two key components
continues on page seven



“With over 15,000 visitors, 14,000 different titles, and \$1 million in profits, the Seforim Sale remains one of the biest and most popular annual events at YU.”

Event-Packed Seforim Sale Aims to Top Last Year’s Profits

By EITAN NOVOGRODSKY

When President Richard Joel penned his email informing every Yeshiva University student and alumnus that this year’s Seforim Sale had merited an article in *The New York Times* (and a comical photo in the “Week in Pictures”), he probably secured a Guinness world record for this year’s most unabashedly proud university president. But in contrast to Yeshiva’s unanticipated Chanukah-season press – with the Maccabeats’ takeover of morning shows and Facebook pages, and the SNL wisecrack about Dreidel-palooza – the Seforim Sale’s public

relations triumph should have us all nodding our heads with dignity.

This year’s sale is on track to maintain its historically formidable statistics – 15,000 people walking through its doors in three weeks, close to a million dollars in sales, and over one hundred volunteers. It boasts over 14,000 titles and operates in conjunction with suppliers worldwide. The sale’s website, theseforimsale.com (SOY has been dropped from the public façade), offers online ordering anywhere in the country and advertises a diverse array of events that make the Seforim Sale a cultural gathering, social hub, and nightlife hotspot that draws

crowds of all types.

This year’s sale hosted six musical events, eight speakers and book signings, a bone marrow drive, and an alumni day. Among the many highlights were Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, Lenny Solomon of Shlock Rock, and Yeshiva’s very own new a capella group, The Y-Studs.

What makes the breadth and success of the sale so remarkable is that the Seforim Sale is not run by the university. Rather, it is an independent corporation operated solely by students. This year’s CEO, Tzvi Feifel (YC ’11), heads a team of five members and a number of others

continues on page five

Bridging Gaps Through Tutoring

YU Students Help Local High Schoolers Graduate

By JOSH BOTWINICK

Just a few blocks north of the Wilf Campus lies George Washington High school. You have probably passed it driving down Audubon, or even seen George Washington students walking through YU on their way to and from school. But you may be surprised to hear that every week, sixteen Yeshiva University students walk past the metal detectors in the school’s entrance and into the building. These volunteers for the President’s Circle Tutoring program provide one-on-one tutoring to

high school students who are having difficulty graduating high school. This past semester, the program helped seven of its fourteen students pass their Regents Examinations.

The program began two years ago, when Aaron Ciner (YC ’10) experienced firsthand the demand for tutors at the local public high school. After a rewarding year of tutoring there through a program called Learning Leaders, Ciner decided to organize a team of tutors for the upcoming Fall 2009 semester. Ciner remembers, “One of the

continues on page six

Inside:

Boycott the Town Hall Meeting	5
Mussolini’s Ambassador Saves Yeshiva	9
Interview with Rabbi Yona Reiss	10
YU Activists Head to Ukraine	11
AEPi Wins National Award	12
My Chemical Romance	15
Dorm Gourmet	18

Staff

Editorials

More Than Just a Yeshiva Program

Sitting through three hours of morning seder and then one-plus hours of shiur every day, it can be easy to forget that a world exists outside the four walls of the beit midrash. This, of course, is sort of the point. An “intensive and sophisticated classical yeshiva experience,” as the undergraduate Jewish Studies webpage promises, can’t happen without a serious time commitment and a certain level of detachment from the outside world. For proof of the effectiveness and popularity of this model, just look at any yeshiva in Israel.

But while high walls keep out distractions, they also prevent those within from seeing the outside world clearly. Cloistering therefore inevitably leads to an inflated sense of self-righteousness and superiority over those who, for whatever reason, have chosen to live outside. Even worse, this attitude can lead to seeing the world in black and white, in terms of those “inside” or “outside.” And, with over 50% of male undergraduates currently enrolled in the Mazer Yeshiva Program (YP), it can be tempting to view the other morning programs as the “outside.”

This idea is dangerous. YP may be the program that most resembles the Israel or “classical yeshiva” experience, but that does not make it better than the others. Each of the four undergraduate Jewish studies programs that YU offers has its own particular strengths. The Stone Beit Midrash Program (SBMP, or, more colloquially, BMP) provides a similar setup to YP, but offers a wider range of study, including several vital subjects, such as tanach, halacha, and machshava, ignored outright by YP. The Isaac Breuer College (IBC) program offers an even wider array of Jewish subjects, all within the more structured context of college-style classes. And Mechinah provides a welcoming doorway to the world of Jewish study to many students who never had the immersive yeshiva day school experience that most of us

take for granted.

Are these programs perfect? No. But neither is YP. Let’s not be fooled by its vast number of students. Many, and likely even the majority, of students in YP chose to be there for the reasons administrators and rebbeim hope for, but there is also an undeniably high level of peer pressure to join this program. How many students enrolled in YP simply because they were told in Israel that anything else “isn’t really learning”?

And then, of course, there’s the darker side of YP. To some, seder until twelve is synonymous with free time until shiur (for others, “until” actually means “including”) and “no grades” means no effort necessary and no consequences, unlike in secular classes, for slacking off. Until YP students are required to take their morning program for credit, as do the students of the other three programs, YP cannot attain the level of seriousness it aspires to; it will remain the noble and difficult choice of some, but the simultaneous easy and lazy way out for others.

To speak of the other morning programs as inferior, to accuse their participants of being somehow less committed and to encourage YP students to be “mekarev” the others, is to ignore the simple fact that everyone is different. Each program seeks to be the ideal for a particular set of students, just as YP seeks to be the ideal for its own. And each program also stands to learn a great deal from the others. Imagine what YP students, most of whom take their Jewish education for granted, could learn by interacting with Mechinah students, many of whose choices to come to YU involved leaving family, friends, and native country behind. Our diversity is our strength. Only by welcoming all types of characters and plotlines can we hope to stay relevant in the next chapter of the Jewish story.

Not Town Halls but Tisches

Last fall’s Town Hall Meeting with President Joel was your average such event: our President spoke inspiringly and enthusiastically about the nobility of Yeshiva University and then opened the floor to questions from the crowd, some of which were important inquiries getting to the heart of Yeshiva’s identity and some of which were, to be frank, issues far below a President’s pay grade. The former type has become a point on which the President’s oratorical skills – and more importantly, style – have been challenged, even leading some to ask for a boycott of the coming Town Hall meeting until the administration actually commits to the “open and meaningful dialogue” it advertises (see “Why You Should Boycott the Town Hall meeting,” Micah Stein, page five).

We should consider, though, that despite misleading flyers and emails, Town Halls are not really about dialogue as much as they are about sometimes pithy but often truly stirring assessments of Yeshiva’s role and direction. What they are not, never have been, and never should be, are settings for students grandstanding complaints about Muss showers, Belfer elevators, or even, dare we say, the Registrar. There are organizations on campus, such as the Student Life Committee or the Student Academic Affairs Committee that serve to address just such issues, not to mention that speaking to the offices of Housing, Facilities, or the Dean will get you much further than bringing up a complaint to a person whose job is far more important than that in front of hundreds of students, faculty, and administrators.

The issues, though, that cut to the core of YU, the issues that do deserve a response, a clarification, or an honest assessment, do have a place at Town Hall meetings. And the answers are not always as clear or as comprehensive as students deserve to hear and admin-

istrators ought to give. But perhaps it is the sheer scale of Town Hall meetings that play a role in the practices that have been called “evasive,” “handling,” and “verbal trickery.” If there is any marked lesson to emerge from this year’s “censorship controversy,” it is that while there are many points worth making and many discussions worth having, context and audience must always be kept in mind.

This past Friday night, newly appointed Vice Provost Lawrence Schiffman, the Shabbat guest on the Wilf Campus, held a *tisch* (informal gathering) in the Rubin shul that lasted well into the night. Vice Provost Schiffman spoke openly, frankly, and genuinely. He admitted when he (rarely) did not have an answer, he explained why certain changes might be difficult to make, and he gently pointed out the errors in some students’ questions. Perhaps this is because he is new and not yet trained in the obfuscation that many are convinced is the hallmark of this administration. But then again, perhaps it was something as simple as the setting – informal, small, and late at night – that allowed Vice Provost Schiffman to have exactly the type of open and meaningful dialogue we all wish the Town Hall meetings could be. No other faculty or administration were present to take offense to any of his remarks, no students were hurriedly scratching down notes so they could dissect and disparage his remarks at a later date, and no more than two dozen truly interested students even listened to Schiffman’s discussion.

Maybe it is not an overhaul of the Town Hall meeting that is needed but added pressure for more discussions like that one: they need not all be on Friday night, but the basic idea – small, student-oriented discussions with administrators *other* than the President of the University – might be exactly what we’re looking for.

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7 Up

1. Blake Griffin. The high-flying rookie dunking phenomenon who has taken basketball fans by storm this season just cemented his reputation with a win in the NBA Slam Dunk Contest, by *jumping over a car* while a gospel choir sang behind him.



2. Rold Gold Everything Bagel Pretzel Rings. Sesame, poppy, onion, and garlic? And they're available in the Caf Store?? Please, everything bagel pretzel gods, let this not be a dream.

3. The King's Speech. Brilliant acting performances, a great screenplay and score, and more than anything, a truly inspiring story of both an individual and a nation.



4. The new SkyCaf salad bar. With lines out the door almost every day, could this new salad haven be too good?

5. The people of Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, and Lebanon (so far?). Glimmers of democracy in a region most had long given up hope of ever seeing emerge from the shroud of extremist theocracies and brutal dictatorships

6. The (New) New York Knicks. With this week's addition of elite scoring machine Carmelo Anthony to a team that earlier this season welcomed superstar Amar'e Stoudemire, New Yorkers just might, for the first time in a decade, have a basketball team to be proud of.



7. Watson, the computer that beat Jeopardy! champions Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter. Say what you will about the feat of computers taking over the world, this invention is a testament to human intelligence more than anything. It's much harder to create something that you can beat than beat something you created.

7 Down

1. Lady Gaga's new song "Born This Way." Boring, flat, and repetitive. A rare stumble from the seemingly unstoppable pop-goddess hit machine.



2. The Walk of Shame. You've overslept, it's now 10:30, and your tefillin are in the main beis . . .

3. Warm Weather Fake Out. "Yay, it's sixty degrees out, we can put away our hats and mittens....oh no wait, it's snowing again."

4. Midterm Sneak Attack. What? The semester just started! How can it be midterms already?

5. Suspicious looking man researching AK-47's and other guns on youtube and wikipedia in the library.

Probably not a great thing, and would qualify as a "something" that those "if you see something say something" ads on the subway refer.



6. When the Sy Syms Fitness Center closes before it's supposed to. The gym has perfectly clear hours of operation, but the staff seems to think it's okay to close fifteen minutes early at 1:45 AM because they feel like it. Some people really do use the gym until 2:00!

7. Songs with catchy tunes but lyrics so vulgar that you're embarrassed to sing them aloud. Enrique Iglesias and The Lonely Island have really mastered this art. You'll have to settle for emphatic humming.



Museum Gala Gathers Student Leaders to Discuss Improvements for YU

By SIMEON BOTWINICK

On Thursday, February 10th, some seventy students made their way over to the Yeshiva University Museum on 16th street after finishing classes for the day, in order to participate in YU's first ever Student Leader Gala. Organized by Presidential Fellows Clara Hersh (YU Museum), Daniella Weprin (Department of Institutional Advancement), and Rachael Fried (Office of Communications and Public Affairs), the event was an attempt to encourage student leaders to communicate with one another and to see each other as all part of a larger, more cohesive community.

"We wanted to build student pride and camaraderie," said Weprin. "We thought that if we started with the student leaders it would begin to trickle down to the rest of the student body."

After students arrived on buses from the two undergraduate campuses, their coats were checked and they were invited up to the museum's second floor to enjoy hors d'oeuvres, view the exhibitions, and mingle with one another. Museum docents were on hand to provide tours of the museum's exhibitions.

A sit-down desert spread soon followed, with addresses to the students from several figures. Hersh, Weprin, and Fried formally welcomed everyone, explaining that the assigned seats were intended to encourage networking.

Dr. Jacob Wisse, director of the museum, then followed. After emphasizing the importance of having student leaders meet with other student leaders, he encouraged the students present to utilize the museum as much as possible. "Use this as a resource," Dr. Wisse said. "It

can complement your studies and serve as an enrichment of your education." Dr. Wisse then went on to describe various ways in which the museum actively involved students, including an art show in which Stern College seniors could display their work, and a program to train student docents.

Barbara Birch, senior director of Alumni Affairs, spoke to the importance of clubs and extra-curricular activities on campus. "You make student life exciting, fun, personable, and memorable," she said. "Lifelong relationships with Yeshiva University begin with involvement in a vibrant campus life."

The keynote speaker for the night was Gavri Butler, who graduated from Yeshiva College in 2004. Now an associate at the law firm Dewey & LeBoeuf LLP, in his time at Yeshiva Mr. Butler was a head RA, a member of the Academic Standards Committee, and Opinions Editor for *The Commentator*. After praising those who put together the event, Mr. Butler described how his experiences as a leader in YU helped him navigate his life later. "What I had going for me is that once I was you," he said. After describing the many things student leaders at YU did when he was an undergraduate, Mr. Butler encouraged the current students to think up crazy ideas and to gather support by sharing those ideas with others. "Learn how to think collaboratively," he concluded, "but don't let that collaboration get in the way."

After the keynote speech, each table of students, led by a Presidential Fellow, began to discuss issues facing the student body and how their clubs were attempting to combat those issues.

"There's a lot of stigma attached

to social scenes in YU," said Meira Frieden, co-President of the Junior Class Board, a statement with which several students at her table agreed. "With the events that we run we try to dispel that."

Adam Kugelman, president of the Soldiers in Exile Club for students who served in the IDF, spoke to the importance of creating social groups within the wider student body. "We never used to know who each other were," he said. "Now we spend time together and have a real community."

Student leaders also discussed ways that they could work together to better student life on campus. "Leadership is about orchestrating change," said Judah Leeder, Presidential Fellow with the Office of Grant Support. "By brainstorming and working together we can improve the university."

When the question of how to better enjoy experiences in college came up, several students mentioned the importance of participating in clubs and events. "We have a relatively small community that offers opportunities you won't find in larger universities," said Fiona Guedalia, co-President of the Students Helping Students club that recently ran Dreidelpalooza. "Getting involved makes all the difference."

Student reactions to the event were overwhelmingly positive. "This shows how much the alumni care about this school," said Melanie Pudles, president of Sy Syms School of Business. "It makes me proud to be a part."

"This event was really important," said Meira Frieden. "I hope ones like it will happen more often."

There's more going on at
YU than you think . . .
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Keep up with Yeshiva University
news, events, and happenings.
Updated daily, to let you know
what's going on beneath the surface of YU.

Resurgence of the Masmid

By JOSEPH WEINBERGER

It's been seven years since the Masmid, the YU yearbook (for men), has seen the light of day. But now, thanks to the proactive and courageous (if you know how hard it is to get things done at YU) efforts of Chief Editor Shaul Seidler-Feller and the rest of his team, the Masmid will once again breathe some fresh air. The inspiration for bringing back the yearbook came to Shaul on a random Saturday night at the end of the spring 2010 semester (the end of Shaul's junior year). While driving back from Brooklyn, Shaul was talking to some friends about finishing up his career at YU. While he was wistfully reminiscing about his prosperous career at YU, the idea of a college yearbook was brought up. Shaul was familiar with YU's Masmid, as he had seen his father's old yearbook floating around his house. He thought to himself, "Wouldn't it be great to bring it back?" And so began the movement to bring back the Masmid.

Shaul's first move was a meeting with Rabbi Blau, Mashgiach Ruchani of YU. While Rabbi Blau thought it would be a great idea to bring the Masmid back, the decision wasn't his to make. He directed him to Dean Schwartz, who in turn sent him to Dean Himber, the Dean of Students. Dean Himber was very interested in the prospect of reviving the Masmid, as he thought it would be a great boost to student life and said he would do all he could to help. He provided Shaul with a class list to get started on contacting the seniors. However, Shaul had also just hit his first roadblock: funding. Dean Himber told Shaul that YU would not fund the yearbook, nor had they in previous years. The money would have to come from the students.

Shaul was not to be stopped. He decided that he would persist with the project and obtain funding from other sources, including student clubs and governments, revenue

from ads in the yearbook, and yearbook purchases. So far the student governments of Yeshiva College, Sy Syms and SOY have agreed to help out with the funding. Another big step towards realizing his goal came early in the summer when Shaul recruited his number two man: Yonatan Cantor. The two of them brought another nine students onto their committee, including four underclassmen and business manager Tzvi Feifel current head of the SOY Seforim Sale.

From summer till November, Shaul and his staff worked on finding a photography studio and a yearbook printing company. They succeeded in both. In November they arranged for the first photo shoot to take place on campus. And here came roadblock number two: only 57 of the expected 200 graduates showed up to get their picture taken. Shaul, although disheartened, didn't give up. He decided to schedule a makeup photo shoot for Wednesday and Thursday, the 23rd and 24th of February. (ATTENTION GRADUATING SENIORS: GET YOUR PICTURES TAKEN! The sitting fee is a mere \$5!)

In addition to arranging the photo shoots, Shaul and his board are currently in the process of gathering information, blurbs, quotes, art work, and reflections on experiences at YU from the graduating seniors. It takes a lot of y-studs and a lot of "beating over the head," as Shaul put it, to squeeze out the necessary information and additional from the senior class.

The name the Masmid is a reference to Hayim Nahman Biallik's poem titled Ha Masmid, or in English, "diligent student," which is usually referred to in the context of Torah study. The poem provides a Maskilic (Jewish Enlightenment) perspective on the diligent student of Torah. Biallik, like YU was trying to mesh the authentic Jewish tradition of Torah study with an enlightened or modern perspective.

Who could pass up the chance to become an eternal sukkah decoration?

High School Students Gather to Solve World's Problems

By JONATHAN SCHWAB

From Sunday, February 6, to Tuesday, February 8, hundreds of high school students from around the world debated important issues as part of Yeshiva University's twenty-first annual National Model United Nations (YUNMUN) conference. The students, from nearly fifty different high schools from four different continents, represented almost all of the United Nations' member countries in fifteen different committees, on topics from the peaceful uses of outer space to the elimination of discrimination against women.

The educational simulation of the U.N. took place at the Stamford Plaza Hotel in Stamford, CT. According to Michael Kranzler, director of undergraduate admissions, the conference is the largest Jewish high

school event of its kind.

The students, who were assigned their representative member countries months before the conference, spent all year preparing their position papers so they could debate their topics and work together to draft resolutions. They also studied the procedures of the United Nations, as they were required to follow set methods of discussion and deliberation. The students had the opportunity not just to work on their public speaking and knowledge of politics and negotiating, but also to meet and work with their peers from Jewish high schools around the world.

On Sunday night, the students enjoyed a Superbowl XLIV party before Secretary General Steven Paletz (YC '11) officially declared the conference in session. The conference, Paletz said, "will illustrate

the inherent difficulties but uplifting possibilities of effecting true change." This knowledge gained at YUNMUN, Paletz said, can help the students increase their enthusiasm and "apply their passions not just in their individual high schools and communities, but across the globe."

Eliora Katz, one of the participating students, said that she "realized that compromise is not just an exercise during a committee session...we must live and breathe to allow the wide spectrum of people's opinions and lives to merge and succeed." Katz's high school, the Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy from Rockville, Maryland, took home the Best Delegation award, placing first among the forty-eight schools at the conference. Michi Hayman (SSSB '11), chair of the International Law Commission, said, "The atmosphere of all these Jew-

ish high schools, nearly 50 of them, coming together is amazing."

Yeshiva University President Richard M. Joel, who delivered the keynote address, spoke of the challenges that the students' generation will face and the lessons they can learn from YUNMUN: "Maps are not eternal. Boundaries shift, sympathies change; it's all up for grabs. Some of it is healthy, but most of it is scary...The UN is a metaphor. It's a metaphor of whether or not we believe in civilization, in civility. Do we believe as a people we can build something together? If we don't, it's back to rules of force. We need to know how to disagree agreeably."

Under Secretary General Tirtza Spiegel (SCW '11), who introduced President Joel, said she loves "getting to build such a productive conference for the students."

Under Secretary General Benjamin Abramowitz (YC '12) agreed, adding that he is "consistently impressed by the students' immense preparation and skillful debate." Abramowitz anticipates returning next year as Under Secretary, for his seventh YUNMUN. Under Secretary General Jina Davidovich (SCW '12) is excited to work next year as Secretary General.

This year's Model UN conference was historic for its inclusion of Jewish high school students from outside North America. Students were thrilled to meet their peers from Brazil, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. The Office of Admissions hopes that this enhancement to the program will help familiarize communities across the world with the Yeshiva mission.

Seforim Sale Continues

continued from front page

who manage the entire production, from finances and operations to advertising and technology. The students put in hours of often stressful planning and co-ordination with no compensation other than “seforim dollars.”

Most impressive, however, is the dedication and business savvy pumped into orchestrating an event of such magnitude, which is ultimately funneled toward student organizations and charities. Proceeds from the sale’s events are set aside for charitable causes chosen by Yeshiva students.

At times, the Seforim Sale may seem to students to be no more than dark-skirted Stern girls

and *beis medrish* boys in search of cheap Koveitz Mephorshims. However, it is worthwhile to take a step back and see the side of the Seforim Sale as it was portrayed in *The New York Times*. Yeshiva students have pulled off something major, constructing a head-turning business venture benefiting both student life and the broader community.

Behind the scenes, this year’s board has made some critical changes to the financial management of the corporation. With an astute awareness of certain ambiguities and potential problems in the company’s bylaws, the board

set out to rewrite them. Under these new rules, the corporation’s finances have become more transparent – allowing YU access to all information – thereby ensuring that the corporation maintains legitimate and lawful activity. The new bylaws also stipulate the exact percentages of proceeds to be received by each of the student organizations and charities.

In the past, the division was left up to the discretion of the board members. The new system alleviates considerable angst and unnec-



essary tension previously placed on the board. The way the money is now divided illustrates exactly how much the Seforim Sale’s board wants the corporation to benefit YU students and charities. Under the new bylaws, SOY and TAC each receive 32.5% of proceeds. Students Helping Students (SHS) - which primarily raises funds for student scholarships - receives 15%, and, according to CEO Tzvi Feifel is “an initiative [the board] is very passionate about.” The remaining 20% of proceeds goes to chesed funds on the Beren and Wilf campuses.

In addition to what is specified

in the bylaws, the Seforim Sale also runs separate charity fundraisers. This year’s fundraiser raised money for the JNF to help respond to the devastating fire which ravaged Northern Israel in December.

The Sale’s board also has a number of other goals for the next few years. This year’s sale features a “New Books” section, which aims to highlight the fact that the Seforim Sale sells everything from classic Talmudic literature to hot-off-the-press modern works. This year, Rabbi Dr. Lamm has two new books in that section.

In terms of monetary goals, the board is aiming to once again break a million dollars. Last year, in the midst of a weak economy, it fell slightly short of that goal. Large, institutional orders will hopefully help to push sales to above the targeted number. Albert Einstein College of Medicine, for example, is placing a large order to enhance its Jewish library.

Improving the website is one of the major objectives for next year’s sale. Though the website has undergone some improvements to make it easier to use, it requires extensive revamping to reach the number of sales it ought to be conducting. Last year the website brought in only \$40,000 – less than 5% of total sales.

Why You Should Boycott the Town Hall Meeting

By MICAH STEIN

Let’s face it: this censorship business is ugly. It’s toxic. The presence of a committee that maintains unchecked authority over campus events undermines student involvement and corrodes administrative credibility. Even if the committee’s powers have only been exercised once, its very existence is insulting to students and damaging to this institution.

But the most troubling aspect of this whole ordeal may be *how* the committee emerged. When the censorship committee – pardon me, “events committee” – was first created, the school issued no announcement or explanation. They released no official guidelines. The committee’s existence was revealed only *after* a student-planned event had been cancelled.

Rather than engaging the student body in a conversation about the unique educational and religious position of Yeshiva University, the administration instead opted for secrecy and misdirection. Now, that same administration has scheduled a Town Hall meeting for March 24, 2011, “intended to promote an open and meaningful dialogue between President Joel and the YU community.”

Don’t go.

You see, we’ve been here before:

Last semester’s Town Hall meeting was similarly advertised as an open forum to engage with President Joel on serious campus issues. We upheld our side of the bargain – students asked tough questions about censorship, campus fees, and women in the Glueck Center.

The honest answers? Not so much. President Joel bobbed and weaved, avoiding the questions with charm and misdirection. Instead of “meaningful dialogue,” we heard some wonderful things about the growth of Yeshiva University and a series of increasingly vague and evasive answers. By the end, the meeting left many of us feeling alienated and marginalized; it was a disheartening experience.

I’m not interested in repeating this cycle. Ultimately, the claim of “meaningful dialogue” from an administration that introduced censorship is too much to bear. You can’t have it both ways: until the administration opens up about the events committee – publicly explaining its function, purpose, and guidelines for monitoring events – it cannot legitimately claim to maintain an open relationship with students.

To continue following the polite path – asking questions at Town Hall meetings and writing strongly-worded articles – epitomizes insanity: doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different

results. We need to act. Or, more precisely, *not* act.

At this point, attending the Town Hall meeting effectively endorses and legitimizes the evasive practices of the administration. Attendance gives President Joel an audience to absorb the same PR-heavy, substance-free content that characterized the last meeting.

At this point, your absence – *our* absence – says more than any hard-nosed question could. Our collective absence from the Town Hall meeting demonstrates that this student body remains united – not in ideology, religious philosophy, or even opposition to censorship, but in the conviction that students are entitled to information, communication, and a voice in determining the policies of Yeshiva University.

This boycott should serve as a wake-up call to the YU administration, a gentle reminder from the student body that, well, we won’t take it anymore. That we demand autonomy, intellectual freedom, and – above all – respect.

It’s unfortunate that things have reached this point, but we simply cannot allow these circumstances to continue. Sometimes, an attack on certain fundamental principles – and censorship certainly qualifies – allows us to set aside the issues that divide us and unite under a common cause. Sometimes a cause demands

Heights Initiative Fair Invites Students to Help Out Local Community

By SIMEON BOTWINICK

On February 1, during the new 6:00 pm Club Hour on Tuesday, representatives from various student programs gathered in Furst 535 to explain the programs they ran and encourage students to join. The fair was part of the Heights Initiative, an ongoing effort run by the Honors Program to increase student involvement with the surrounding Washington Heights neighborhood.

“We’re part of a larger community,” said Dr. Gabriel Cwilich, director of the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program, to introduce the event. “We want to make a positive difference here, so that people know who we are.”

Daniel Rosen, Vice-Chairman of the Honors Student Council and one of the organizers of the event, later explained the importance of publicizing the student organizations that already exist on campus. “Many YU students are interested in doing community service, but are unaware of the easily accessible local opportunities,” he said. “This fair consolidated all of these opportunities into one accessible place for the students to quickly peruse and pick the opportunity which suited them the best.”

Adam Berman and Ari Goldberg, who run the two initiatives that make up the YU Literacy Program (see coverage on front page), spoke first. Berman, who’s in charge of the middle school program, spoke about the impact that the program has already had on the students it helps. “We really have an opportunity to help the community in a meaningful way,” he emphasized, mentioning the forty local students who YU students currently tutor twice a week in a variety of subjects.

Goldberg, who runs the high school program, spoke about the importance of reaching out to a community in need. “While we’re worrying about our grades and GPA,” he said, “it’s important to realize that just a few blocks from here are

action that may not qualify as prudent or proper.

This boycott is not meant as an act of defiance or disrespect. In fact, it derives from a profound appreciation for this institution and an understanding of the role Yeshiva University plays within the Jewish community. Rather, a boycott represents the most effective and appropriate response to the behavior of the YU administration. With its actions over the past year – censorship, evasion, lack of communication – the administration has already chosen its path. That’s fine. But it means that the opportunity for “open and meaningful dialogue” has come and gone.

Let’s make that clear on March 24.

students almost the same age as us who are struggling to graduate from high school.” The high school program helps students, not only with their immediate classes, but also with SAT prep and navigating the college application process.

Marlon Danilewitz offered an avenue for the more physically active YU students to get involved. Danilewitz, who runs several Health and Sports programs with four different schools in the community, encouraged students to help out with after-school basketball programs and a Mighty Miles running league, and even mentioned a possible program to be run in the future with a YMHA.

Justin Bral spoke next about the importance of bone-marrow donation. “Different ethnic groups, including Hispanics, have a very difficult time finding bone-marrow matches,” explained Bral. “Just as the Gift of Life campaign brought the Orthodox Jewish community’s chance of finding a bone-marrow match from 1 to 70%, we want to do the same thing here.”

Yair Saperstein spoke for the Start Science program, which combats a lack of science teachers in public schools by allowing biology, chemistry, physics, and engineering students at YU to design and then teach classes in local schools. He also spoke for Future, a program which gives students at YU the chance to work with public school science teachers to develop and teach classes.

Shmuel Herzig described a program that brought students to a local geriatric hospital to work with elderly patients suffering from Alzheimer’s.

Dr. Cwilich finished the fair by presenting on behalf of the three final programs. The YU Bridgers, who gained recognition last year on their running trips across the George Washington Bridge in brightly colored shirts, hope to continue their presence on the bridge this year, with further runs and a clean-up effort.

Another program, run by Sy Syms School of Business, identifies students with business skills and pairs them up with local small businesses that need help. Several students participated in this program last year, including one who helped move a bookstore online and another who increased the profits of a beauty salon by 70%.

The final initiative, also presented by Dr. Cwilich, finds volunteers to work with the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance, which helps emerging artists in the community by running public art displays and workshops.

YU Tutors Help Students Pass Regents Exams

continued from front page

students whom I first worked with, on the English regents, was only one year younger than me, but had extreme difficulty understanding the theme of a four paragraph Regents essay or determining the author's point of view. I thought, 'There is such a great need here for these students to receive extra, more individualized help in their studying, and what many of them are lacking are basic concepts and knowledge.'

considering dropping out of high school because they have other responsibilities or are simply too far behind. Most of them live in Washington Heights and come from Spanish-speaking homes.

For many of these students, the classroom setting is simply too overwhelming and even this program is not enough. "They're sitting in a class with thirty people," explained Ari Goldberg, Co-President of the

being too much of an insular community with regard to Washington Heights. This was an opportunity to make a *kiddush hashem*."

Raquel Rodriguez, a nineteen-year-old student at George Washington in her fifth year of high school, was encouraged to sign up for a tutor last semester. "I needed one Regents to graduate, but also wanted to improve my grade in two other regent exams," said Rodriguez. "Avi Fink helped me with...integrated algebra." After studying with Fink for the Fall 2010 semester, Rodriguez passed her math Regents and graduated high school.

Tutors meet with their students for an hour once a week sometime after 3pm. For many of these tutors, the responsibility extends beyond conveying the necessary information. Dani Weiss, who is tutoring for his third consecutive semester, believes that "We as tutors have a purpose that is two-fold: to teach the required material, and to develop a genuine relationship with the student which will serve as the student's gateway to a higher degree of self esteem needed to pass his or her exams."

"We're not just trying to provide tutors," added Goldberg, "We're trying to provide people who can serve as mentors. The fact that they can look up to people wearing a kipa and tzitzis, and say that he was a nice guy and helped me pass my Regents, is a nice thing."

This is especially true because of the age difference between tutor and student, Goldberg said. "Lots of people expect someone in high school, and they're surprised to find someone their own age. For the kids too, they're being tutored by someone their own age, and it makes them want to get on in life."

Funding was, and still is, the biggest obstacle. The YABC requires each tutor to be fingerprinted, at a cost of \$115. As of now, the money for new tutors comes from the President's Circle, a fund that provides grants for selected student programs. Due to the cost of finger-

printing, tutors must commit to at least a full semester, and the number is capped at fifteen tutors.

The tutoring is volunteer, but the rewards for tutors and students alike are tremendous. Of the fourteen George Washington students with YU tutors last semester, six have successfully graduated George Washington High School. In a letter of support for the President's Circle tutoring program, YABC Director Marsha Milan Bethel wrote this past February, "The Yeshiva University students have been instrumental in helping our students graduate by passing their Regents examinations and their subject area classes...I look forward to continuing this partnership."

Some tutors were pleasantly surprised by the atmosphere they encountered in George Washington High School. "I expected there to be fights in the hallways, and an overall chaotic atmosphere," said Ciner. "I found the students to be respectful and the atmosphere to be for the most part orderly... I found George Washington to be much more 'normal' than I had imagined." Ciner was also pleased that "I found most of the students that I worked with to be motivated, with a desire to go to college, and learn, but simply without the skill-set and necessary support, which was disappointing, but which also inspired me to try to help in some small way."

The high school students also appreciate this bridging of cultural gaps. "I think it's cool that the YABC and YU have a connection in tutoring," said Rodriguez. "I remember being interested in going to YU when I was in high school."

Some George Washington students did in fact have the opportunity to visit the Wilf Campus. Rodriguez expressed her excitement about the one time she met with her tutor in the YU library. One tutor even brought his student to a Macs basketball game.

Tutors who are considering going into education found the experience insightful in that regard as well. Jonathan Schwab explained, "I volunteered because I already had some interest in education, and this exposed me to some of the frustra-

tions but also some of the rewards of that field."

The President's Circle Tutoring Program dovetails with the larger movement known as the "Heights Initiative (see coverage on page five)," an attempt to increase YU's interaction with the surrounding community. The Heights Initiative's literacy, fitness, science, arts, and other programs are all geared to create what Dr. Cwilich calls "the big umbrella." Goldberg explained, "If you're walking down the street and you see a guy not from YU you kind of look the other way because you have nothing in common. This provides that bridge by which they can see us as real people and vice versa."

As the George Washington security guards nod Weiss into the building every week, Weiss feels the same way. "This program not only strengthens my tie to the community, but strengthens the community's overall perception of the university as a whole. Washington Heights is an extremely insular community and many of its residents still do not exactly know what goes on on our few university blocks - and this program hopes to change that perception in a very positive way."

In May 2010, the President's Circle Tutoring Program joined with the YU Literacy Program, which provides tutors for the PS143 middle school on 183 and Audubon. The two programs combined currently supply over 55 YU tutors to the nearby schools every semester. "Our tutors show the community that we want to be involved and help out in any way we can," said Adam Berman, head of the YU Literacy Program. "YU has tremendous resources and it is important that we use those resources to build the community around us."

The President's Circle tutoring program is almost full for the Spring 2011 semester, with fourteen student tutors and two unofficial tutors from the faculty. However, both the President's Circle tutoring program as well as the Literacy Program are always looking for new tutors for upcoming semesters.

Schwab cautions incoming tutors, "For anyone who's considering it, it's an incredible experience, but it's really not to be taken lightly. You have a responsibility to the student, who could see you as the most important help toward graduating high school." Schwab's student from the Fall 2010 semester finally graduated high school this past January, after passing her U.S. History regents on her fourth attempt.

If taken seriously, everyone involved stands to gain. As Weiss puts it, "Being part of this program is so much more than just tutoring - It is just as much about showing the Washington Heights community who we are and that we are here to be of service in any way possible."



Given the fact that YU was only a few blocks away, it made sense to me to try to involve more YU students in the YABC program."

Ciner is referring to the Young Adult Borough Center, situated in Washington Heights. This organization provides evening classes to students ages 17-21 who are in their fifth year of high school and still wish to graduate. They may be con-

President's Circle tutoring program. "Some kids benefit a lot, but some need one-on-one help. That's where we come in." As many as thirty percent of YABC's students receive free one-on-one tutoring in addition to their evening classes. But Goldberg admitted that he also had his own motivations for getting involved: "I saw there was a different issue. My perspective was from YU

to provide tutors," added Goldberg, "We're trying to provide people who can serve as mentors. The fact that they can look up to people wearing a kipa and tzitzis, and say that he was a nice guy and helped me pass my Regents, is a nice thing."

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Schiffman Becomes Newest Member of the YU Family

continued from front page

of the faculty unification process: the legal component and the actual unification. Legally, the unification should hopefully be accomplished by the fall. Fully integrating the faculty, however, will take more time.

For one thing, courses are already set for the Fall semester, so while one or two changes might occur, professors will generally not be switching campuses. As Schiffman explains, if this is going to work, it needs to happen in the right order. "First we have to get people from a corporate level into one faculty, because faculty have authority over the programs. Once we do that, we have to give them a chance to work together, to get to know each other. Then they start to plan the next year's program, together. Then



they start to say, 'Hey, why don't you teach here, why don't you go there?' If you go out of order, you will have a fiasco, having a bunch of people who don't know one another trying to work together." Down the line, the hope is that professors will be going back and forth on both campuses, and eventually will start standardized programming. The last step, however, is the faculty's decision. While the administration can push it, the programming is up to the faculty.

Schiffman's move from NYU is a change for him in a few ways. First, it is a shift from focusing mostly on graduate programs to undergraduate ones, which means he will be involved in less teaching. It also involves a difference in ideological commitments. "Over there, the

ideological commitment is because the Judaic Studies belongs in studies of Western Civilization and culture, and we are providing in their courses, yes, education for Jews, but also for a lot of friends, as many Christians and non-Jews are taking the courses, and they are friends of the Jewish people, friends of Israel. We are providing an aspect of campus that is important for the integration into the general population. And of course, the studies are conducted as an objective discipline, as it should be, so that the classes are open to everyone. Over here, while much of that remains true, there is the added dimension of educating Jews to be Jews." Schiffman points out that while the last is true in NYU in the Bronfman center, that commitment is separate in various ways. Therefore, the ideological commitments that he has in both places overlap, but are still very different.

Ultimately, Schiffman decided to come to YU to take on a particular challenge. He felt that he had the opportunity here to administer something larger, which he is very committed to and wants to make sure is done correctly. After applying for the job and interviewing with the search committee, the Provost, the President, and the president of the board, Schiffman was offered the position.

Since he has arrived here, he has already discovered many new things he did not know. "There has been amazing faculty development in the last years here, and these people are not being shared with all the students... There has been all this effort put in, all kinds of new people, laboratories, equipment, and programs. Just by bringing these resources together, you are going to get a lot more for the effort, and more for the money."

Acoustic Anyone? YU Unplugged Competition Spurs Students to Reduce Electricity

BY SOPHIE FELDER

February 1st marked the beginning of YU Unplugged, Yeshiva's famed annual inter-dorm competition. Until March 31st, all Yeshiva University dorms will pit themselves against each other to see which building's inhabitants can reduce their electricity consumption the most – for fame, glory and a foosball table. The Office of Sustainability, who offered the prize, hopes to encourage each dorm to work together to win, for themselves and for the environment.

The competition, developed by past Environmental Club member Michael Goon, began in 2009 when Rubin Hall (on the Wilf campus) took the title. They were, however, unable to secure a second win when in 2010 Muss Hall (also on Wilf) swooped in to claim the championship.

The incentive of a foosball table seems to be inspiring students this year, like Simi Eisenman, a senior at Stern College. Although she says she "isn't competitive," she admits that she'd "still like Brookdale to reduce the most." Moreover, she says the competition "is making her do things she'd always heard people recommend, but never actually tried."

Electricity, like water, is one of the easiest commodities to waste; at

YU in particular it contributes 35% of the university's total carbon emissions. People tend to assume that electricity is just "there," the same way they assume that milk just sort of comes from Duane Reade. We often don't realize that fuel is required to power up laptops, desk lamps and all things that go beep in the night. All forms of electricity production require the spinning of turbines in order to convert kinetic energy into



electrical energy. Many of these turbines are powered by gas, meaning that turning on your toaster is like turning on your car. The price of crude oil is up to \$91.43 per barrel, so not only is the use of electricity a player in the depletion of natural resources, but it costs a pile too.

But YU Unplugged is more than just a movement to reduce students' intake - it's about the education. In a video released by the Environmental

Club, President Richard Joel takes on the initiative in his own office and encourages students to do the same. On its website, the Office of Sustainability also offers tips about how to win the competition, including the advice to "unplug equipment even when it is not in use." Many students may be surprised to learn that even when appliances are turned off, they are using what has been termed "vampire power," a phrase meant to connote the wasteful sucking of important commodities. Prevention of this energy loss is among one of the many habits that YU Unplugged hopes to instill in students in order to create a more environmentally sensitive and conscientious student body.

Rachel Sussman, a YU Eco Rep with the Office of Sustainability, recently noted that "it is nice to see Yeshiva University taking the initiative, educating, and getting students excited about recycling." She also praised YU Unplugged for "pushing students to take action." It seems there is a need and desire for change within the YU system. Programs like YU Unplugged help students understand the importance of these small actions and create awareness, inspiring students to be more aware of the environment around them.

Institutionalized Corruption

BY ROBERT RAND

"Professor, would you mind if I cheated?"

"Well... How would you like to cheat?"

"I feel that I didn't have enough time to properly write the last question on the exam before I had to leave. Would you mind if I wrote it again?"

"Of course. Go home, think about it over the weekend, and when you have time type up an answer and email it to me."

At the time I viewed the request as my only option. I felt it was justified: I had to leave for my next exam that day while other students finished writing their tests. My final

essay had been garbage, and I felt that given extra time I could have written it properly. But the fact remains that I was granted a huge advantage over my classmates. It was an advantage that secured me an A in the course, an A that constitutes perhaps the biggest blemish on my academic record.

When a student cheats, it constitutes a grave breach of trust and causes considerable harm to his university, which has to struggle to maintain a level playing field. But when an institution promotes inequality – when a professor allows half a class to continue writing an exam as the other half rushes off to the next final, it is a disaster. It is this type of nonchalance about rules

among Yeshiva's staff that should cause every student to hang his head and the members of the Academic Standards Committee to tender their resignations.

At the end of last semester I asked a professor to grant an extension for a paper. He agreed that due to my specific set of circumstances I deserved extra time, but said the paper must be turned in by the last day of exams. During the summer I asked a friend how well he did in the course. He informed me that he had just sent in the paper the day before. It turned out that upwards of half the class turned in their paper during the summer, with no requests for extensions, and no consequences for their grades. It was as if the professor

stood up and declared "If you know how I work, you may have as much time as you wish. If you take me at my word, this is your deadline."

The only thing worse than a professor who refuses to enforce his academic requirements, is one who has such rules and deliberately ignores them. A friend of mine recently took a class in which the professor clearly spelled out in the syllabus that a third of a letter grade would be deducted from papers for each session they were delayed. A friend handed in a paper over a month late and received back a B+ – a mathematical impossibility according to the professor's system. Certainly some other student could have dramatically improved his es-

say over that month, but, to use the common parlance, he got shafted.

I have barely scratched the surface of what goes on behind the scenes in our university. I know of a professor who used his authority to change a student's grade after that most final of deadlines after which, Dean Sugarman assures us, all incomplete grades default to F. This professor received a student's final paper after that deadline, pulled the F, and replaced it with an A. Then there is the case of the "notes." These are the famous notes, which inevitably everyone in a class will have except for one poor student, who will fail. I have a seen a professor reference these notes which were sitting on his desk roughly

continues on next page

Who's really cheating anyway?

continued from previous page

two weeks after a midterm, well after some of his students could hope to recover. In a similar example, a decade's worth of pertinent exam questions circulate among students who use them to ace a specific YC course. Students have asked the professor if they could use these questions and he has granted them permission – but some students remained in the dark until the day they failed his course.

I have often seen Yeshiva University called out as an institution in which students cheat. Except for that cases just cited – in which any cheating resulted from an ambiguity

whether using such papers constitutes cheating – I have no evidence to back up that claim. The following is excerpted from Dr. Lebow's syllabus to Advanced Calculus I:

We will use a Modified Moore Method to accomplish both goals. Most of the class time of a Moore Method course consists of students presenting solutions that they produce from the notes provided by the instructor. In the original Moore method students use no textbooks or other references and work as individuals; in our modification students are encouraged to work in small groups of three or four, but still no

outside help is allowed.

To be clear, the above meant that for the duration of our enrollment in MAT 1520 we were not allowed to buy an Analysis textbook, we were forbidden look up related subjects on Wikipedia or talk about them with senior students. If we discussed a problem with our classmates we had to put their names on top of our proofs. And yet, to my knowledge, no one cheated. No one ever came to class with a proof from Wolfram MathWorld. When the rules are clear and the professor expects students to follow them, in my experience they will, and I think that's because YU

students are honest. The institution, as we have seen, is not.

The solution to these problems can be encapsulated in a single word: guidelines. This means reasonable penalties for late work, incomplete assignments and the like, which will be enforced. This means an announcement at the beginning of every class either announcing and permitting the use of a certain set of notes or making it clear that using others' notes will constitute the gravest breach of academic integrity. This means explaining to students what kind of assistance they can request from their peers, from tutors and from the writing center.

To be clear, I recognize that there is another side of the coin. At the other end of the spectrum stands a professor who admits that distributing an old exam would help his student learn the material but he will not do so because he suspects them of cheating. This approach – which I've also seen at YU – is no more acceptable. The "Weissberg Commons" approach to academic integrity, in which a student with a stomach problem uses the facilities under pain of failure, may well violate the Geneva Conventions. Moreover, sometimes the university's standard guidelines simply will not work for a specific course or a specific professor. College is not a game and, as such, professors have the right to demand

their students' best work without pointless restrictions. Hence, if particular circumstances demand it, they should grant extensions, but some rules must govern their doing so. If they need more than two hours and fifteen minutes to test the material, they should request longer timeslots in which every student can and must be there. Alternatively, they should offer take-home finals (which are crucial for a proper education and should undoubtedly be permitted), in addition to or in place of the in-class final. However, these changes must be clearly defined, otherwise you divide a class into those who are in the loop and those outside of it. You grant one student six weeks to work on a paper and another sixteen months. In short, you cheat for the students who know you best.

At the end of last semester I received a take-home exam in an email. The email specified that we had exactly two days to complete the exam, instead of the three days the professor had agreed to give us in class. I brought this to her attention and she responded that one student had already sent in his test, and she couldn't privilege the rest of the class over him. I prepared to argue that this student had made his own choice by choosing to write a two day final in a few hours, that, in any case, if there was a single student in a single subject who bore no risk of getting an A-, it was this student, in this subject. I looked at her email again and I realized that it didn't matter. A professor must be fair, and a university must be fair to all its students. And so I sat down and I wrote my exam.



Open Letters Received by The Commentator

Dear Yeshiva University Colleagues,

Let us perform a thought experiment.

Suppose George Soros provided money for a series of lectures at Yeshiva College, and we were exposed to such eminent liberals as Paul Krugman, Michael Moore, Keith Olbermann, Ronald Reagan Jr. Would there not be a feeling—even on the part of conscientious liberals—that the University is being associated with a partisan political position and that that is not appropriate for an institution of learning. Almost every important issue has two or more sides to it.

Why then are we being exposed to the one-sided lectures all year long sponsored by the notorious Koch brothers? If they really are interested in the educational process, should they not fund an equal number of talks from the opposing camp?

Or, to really have a chance to educate the students as well as faculty colleagues, should there not be formal debates between members of the two major ideological positions, conservative and liberal?

If this were Jerry Falwell's or Pat Robertson's or Oral Roberts' universities, the question would not need to be raised. But, for goodness' sake, this is Yeshiva University, and the question must be raised.

Sincerely,

Manfred Weidhorn
Abraham and Irene Guterman Professor of English

Dear Yeshiva University Colleagues,

I write in response to Professor Weidhorn's letter, which is prompted by a speaker's series I have organized that is supported by a small grant from the Koch Foundation. With this grant I brought in three speakers last term: Robert Lawson from Auburn University, Richard Pipes from Harvard University, and Karol Boudreaux from George Mason University; and I will bring in three speakers this term: David Boaz from the Cato Institute, Richard Epstein from the University of Chicago and New York University, and Mark LeBar from the University of Arizona.

Neither Professor Weidhorn nor anyone else is required to attend the lectures. They are intended only to complement the already impressive array of disciplines and perspectives that speakers at Yeshiva University represent. And, of course, Professor Weidhorn is welcome, indeed encouraged, to bring in speakers of his own choosing.

As I told Professor Weidhorn last term when he raised a similar complaint, a condition of my and of Yeshiva College's acceptance of the Koch Foundation grant was that I, not anyone from the Koch Foundation, would, in consultation with Yeshiva College faculty and students, select the speakers. The Koch Foundation agreed to that condition. I have neither asked for nor received advice from the Koch Foundation about whom to invite. I have not communicated with the "notorious Koch brothers" at all.

Each of the speakers invited is a serious scholar in his or her own right, and it demeans them to compare them to entertainers or to falsely suggest that they represent merely a "partisan political position." They were selected because they have written substantively on issues discussed in my classes—last term, a course on development economics; this term, a course on moral arguments for competing systems of political economy—and nothing less would have been acceptable to me or to my students.

Professor Weidhorn suggests that perhaps Yeshiva University might host debates between defenders of opposing positions. I think this is a splendid idea. Giving exposure to differing and even competing ideas in a tolerant spirit of open, free, and civil discussion is part of the very essence of a university. I encourage Professor Weidhorn to pursue the idea, and I hereby volunteer to help.

Sincerely,

James Otteson
Joint Professor of Philosophy and Economics

Mussolini's Ambassador Saves Yeshiva

COMPILED BY ELIE FRIEDMAN AND ADAM ZIMLOVER

In 1940, Yeshiva University President Bernard Revel came to Rabbi Leo Jung with a request. Jung, rabbi of Manhattan's Jewish Center Synagogue and sometimes a fundraiser for Yeshiva, was asked to help raise a sum of "about \$100,000" (equivalent to about \$1.5 million in 2011) to save the school's buildings from foreclosure. Having in mind no specific source for such a large sum, the rabbi agreed to help, but did not want to make any promises.

The story took an unlikely turn the following Shabbat. Following services, during which he delivered his regular sermon, Jung was ap-

proached by a man with elegant, but accented English. The man praised both the service and the sermon as among "the most beautiful" he had ever attended and asked for permission to come again. Jung invited him to do so, and, "week after week," the foreign gentleman showed up to Saturday morning services.

The man, it turned out, was Enrico Garda. A protégé of Benito Mussolini – and a secret Jew – Garda had served as the Italian dictator's ambassador to France. He then resided in New York's Park Crescent Hotel and, since arriving in the US, had identified as "a proud member of Israel." Only a few weeks after meeting Rabbi Jung, however, Garda stopped coming to services.

Concerned, the rabbi telephoned Garda's residence and found out that the ambassador had become deathly ill. He rushed to Garda's bedside. After talking at length about his past, a grateful Garda asked what he could do in appreciation of the rabbi's concern. The rabbi refused any personal favors. But, when the ambassador asked about institutions close to the rabbi's heart, Jung mentioned Yeshiva College.

Garda had a history of making large grants, though to causes decidedly different from Yeshiva College. In 1915, he offered a gift of 10,000 lira (\$2,000) for the "Italian aviator achieving greatest distinction during war." In 1929, he offered a prize of 50,000 lira for the best bio-

graphical work on Italian poet and proto-fascist, Gabriele d'Annunzio. In honor of Jung, Garda decided to direct his money to a new sort of cause. He called in his secretary and asked, "Would you give the rabbi the check?" A stunned Rabbi Jung was promptly handed a check for \$50,000.

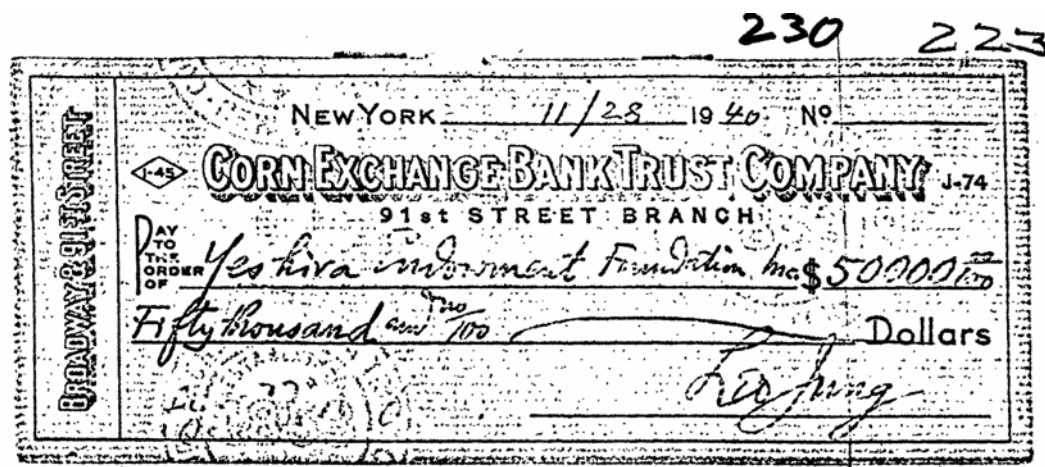
Jung now had to act quickly. Garda's health was rapidly failing, and Jung had to deposit the check before it would become worthless upon the ambassador's death. Contacting a bank director who also served as a trustee in his synagogue, the rabbi immediately deposited the check. But Jung did not want to hand over the money with carte blanche. Instead, he approached Mendel Gottesman, Yeshiva's treasurer, with an ultimatum: if Gottesman could raise enough money to permanently forestall foreclosure, Jung would hand over the check. Otherwise, he would return it to Garda's estate. Then began a whirlwind campaign to raise \$80,000. With the help of a number of friends, Jung and Gottesman scraped together the money and saved Yeshiva.

Garda's legacy to Yeshiva did not end, however, with the depositing of his check. He set one condition on his gift: using the interest from his donation, Yeshiva must grant an annual award of \$1,000

to "any member of the Jewish faith who [had] promote[d] a spirit of courage and self-respect as well as of patriotism to the United States of America, among the American Jews." Fearing, though, that Mussolini would harm his family for having given so large a donation to a country at war with Italy, Garda asked that the award be given using his Hebrew name: Mordecai ben David. From that year on, Yeshiva granted the Mordecai ben David Award to recipients ranging from Israel's Chief Rabbi Herzog to Dr. Jonas Salk, discoverer of the polio vaccine.

The first document to the left is a copy of the check that Rabbi Jung wrote to transfer the \$50,000 to the "Yeshiva Endowment Foundation" (Source: Yeshiva University Archives). The second document printed below is the letter written by Enrico Garda to Rabbi Leo Jung describing his donation of \$50,000 to Yeshiva (Source: The Path of a Pioneer: The Autobiography of Leo Jung).

The Commentator would like to thank Yeshiva University archivist, Shulamith Berger, for her extraordinary assistance in researching this article.



Garda's Letter

New York, 18 July 1940

Dear Rabbi Jung:

Confirming my intentions and desires with respect to the \$50,000.00 cheque I delivered to you a few days ago, it is my wish and I have given you said money with the understanding that you will arrange, as soon as you will find expedient, to apply the said money to the establishment of a cash prize to be known as the Mordecai ben David Prize or Award or any other designation you may determine, and to be granted and awarded annually to the student or graduate of Yeshiva College (foremost Orthodox school of learning in the United States) who shall have achieved most noteworthy record or success in the promotion and encouragement of self-respect, self-defence, independence and courage among members of the Jewish faith and in the promotion and encouragement among American Jews of a deep and abiding sense of loyalty, devotion and patriotism to their country, native or adopted, the United States of America. In addition to the duty common to all the other citizens towards their country there is added to the American Jews the sacred obligation of their infinite gratitude for the enjoyment of the generous hospitality and equality before the law in this country which Jews do not find any more except in this great land of the United States of America.

As I have implicit confidence in your judgment, I give you carte blanche authority to work out all necessary details to effectuate my wishes and desires aforementioned, and to use your own discretion in determining the form in which the proposed prize should be designated...and I hereby ratify, confirm and approve whatever you may do or cause to be done in, about or concerning this matter.

Enrico Garda

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Reiss on RIETS: A Two-Years Retrospective

BY SIMEON BOTWINICK

Rabbi Yona Reiss, who graduated from Yeshiva College in 1987, has served as the Max and Marion Grill Dean of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) since July 1, 2008. After receiving a J.D. from Yale Law School in 1992, Rabbi Reiss worked as an associate at the international law firm of Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton in New York City. In 1998 he was appointed director of the Beth Din of America, a position he held until his appointment as dean of RIETS. We spoke with him about his two years of leading the 115-year-old rabbinical seminary.

What changes has RIETS undergone since you've taken over?

We've worked very hard to better consolidate all of our operations. *Sganei mashgichim*, professional rabbinics courses, and the bochein all used to operate out of different offices, but we've brought them together and created a single administrative team. This enables us to plan in a more cohesive and coordinated fashion, to better meet the needs of the *yeshiva* and of our students. The *shoelim umeshivim* and *sganei machgichim*, who were once in separate offices, now are under one administrative authority. And all undergraduate Jewish studies programs are now under the central administration of RIETS.

We've tried to make the office more technologically savvy – we've computerized records, set up informational databases, and placed applications to *kollelim* and *semikha* online to make them more accessible. We've redesigned our brochures to make them clearer, and have placed much information about our programs on our website, which we now constantly update.

We have established more rigorous policies of monitoring performance for different programs. We try to pick up students who are slipping in attendance or performance as early as possible, to give them attention and access to *sganei mashgichim*. The point here is to immediately present them with the rehabilitative tools to encourage improvement. We want students to know that they are important, and to appreciate the fact that they are noticed. For YP, in particular, we've designed a pre-probation status for underperforming students, requiring them to take *shiur* for credit the next semester and restricting their credits to 14. The purpose of the former is to light a fire to encourage improved performance, while the latter is intended to help the student manage a tough dual curriculum.

To better place students, we have developed a more precise classifica-

tion of YP *shiurim*. We've divided *shiurim* by learning method into *blott*, analytical, conceptual, *yediot*, and *halacha lema'aseh shiurim*. Within each category we've also developed a hierarchy within those categories. Now when we test students we have a more thoughtful and precisely calibrated plan to better serve their needs.

We have also done much to improve the overall Torah environment. The Glueck Center's additional spaces have allowed us to give every *shiur* its own location for morning *sefer*, along with a seat for each *rebbe* to learn alongside his *talmidim*. Many of them learn there every day. Indeed, it is our desire that the totality of the *rebbeim* will spend the entire *sefer* with their *talmidim*.

In a further step to unify the *beis medrash* we have instituted one *yeshiva*-wide *mincha minyan* every day at 2:33. We try to set it at just the right pitch, tone, and speed so that all *talmidim* will attend. This *minyan* is intended to make the student community feel more anchored and unified.

One sentiment I received when I came in here was that a number of students returning from Israel wanted to be part of the YP program because of its structure and time commitments, but didn't have the skills necessary to do so. We therefore introduced a skill-building *shiur* in YP, which has become a popular avenue for integration into the *yeshiva* environment.

We have vastly improved the RIETS press, and in fact just published a *halacha lema'aseh sefer* by Rabbi Sobolofsky on *hilchot nidah*, as well as a book on *drashot* of Rabbi Lamm, together with the OU; others are in the works. We also recently produced *Mitoch HaOhel*, a masterful model of the blend of Torah erudition and worldly sophistication that YU is all about.

Finally, we have brought in a *beis medrash* coordinator to ensure that *sefarim*, tables, and general upkeep are all properly maintained.

In general, our overall objective has been to make *Yeshiva* more welcoming for all students of all backgrounds, to give students the skills to maximize Torah learning and growth, and to prepare students for integration into an increasingly complex modern world by using appreciation and knowledge of Torah to contribute to the world at large.

What role does Rabbi Charlop, the former dean and current dean emeritus, play in RIETS' operations?

He is my right hand, and an incredibly important presence for the *Yeshiva* as a whole in terms of what he has contributed over many decades. For me personally he is an indispensable mentor with whom I consult regularly.

What ideally should every student walk away from his Yeshiva education with?

I'll quote the pasuk in Kohelet: "*Sof davar hakol nishma, et ha'elokim yera ve'et mitzvotav tishmor, ki zeh kol ha'adam*" [The end of the matter, all having been heard: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the entirety of man]. We want students to walk away with a profound sense of *yirat shamayim* [fear of Heaven], an appreciation for Torah and how it relates to the world, and the ability to live lives of Torah and *mitzvot* to the fullest degree of sophistication. We also want students to walk away with a love of all *klal yisrael*, an appreciation for different types of Jews and Jewish communities, and an understanding that all types of Jews can contribute to our people. Everyone should see themselves as part of a larger community with a mission to lead exemplary Torah



lives as a *kiddush hashem* to the broader universe.

What challenges have you faced in your time here?

We are living at perhaps a watershed moment for the Jewish community. A certain segment is moving in a direction that some categorize as "the right," while another segment is moving towards what others call "the left." As President Joel has put it, we're trying to maintain a big tent. We're trying to keep our institution welcoming while at the same time maintaining a steadfastness to Torah traditions and Torah values.

I'll also mention that whenever you deal with a large community, issues inevitably arise. Each of our *Roshei Yeshiva* has a slightly different perspective. It's important to work with and listen to different perspectives in order to help refine and define your own. All the individuals I work with are people of immense sensitivity and thoughtfulness who have an appreciation for the mission of our *yeshiva*. Each brings a different strength to the furtherance of this mission, and I have not in terms of philosophical approach encour-

tered any major impediments. I've faced different approaches on how to reach our goals, but the goals themselves are shared by everybody in this *yeshiva*.

What are your thoughts on Yeshivat Chovevei Torah? Has the existence of another Orthodox rabbinic ordination program in New York caused a drop in attendance here?

There has been no enrollment drop, and in fact our last *chag hase-mikhah* featured our largest graduating class ever. In general, I'm happy for as large a cross section of students as possible to be able to learn Torah from whatever institutions are appropriate for them.

How would you describe the differences between RIETS and Chovevei?

I don't look to compare our program with others – I think we are a self-standing entity. I will say that one of the great advantages of our *yeshiva* is our continuity from the great traditional *yeshivot* in Europe. We have at least three generations of *rebbeim* who have learned from the masters of classical *yeshiva* training, and we work constantly to continuously carry the mantle of the *mesorah*. We were the first *yeshiva* on American shores and we remain at the forefront in tackling modern issues, developing skill sets for rabbinical students, and providing a first-rate Torah education. We have a top-notch faculty of rabbinic instructors who are considered among the best in their fields. Even publications such as *The New York Times* have noted our innovative approaches, such as our use of professional actors in classrooms in order to simulate real-life scenarios.

Is there any situation in which you would encourage a graduating student of Yeshiva College to pursue rabbinic ordination at Chovevei and not RIETS?

I think everybody needs to follow their heart and inclinations and to find the place that's best for them.

What is your position on rabbinic ordination for women?

My personal position is that I don't think, *halachically* speaking, a woman may be ordained as a rabbi. The Rambam says that calling someone a rabbi carries with it the connotation that they may serve as a *dayan* [judge]. Since a woman is not eligible to be ordained as a *dayan*, rabbinic ordination is off limits as well. I would add that to some degree this question is a distraction and is merely part of a larger important discussion on women's roles in the Jewish community. There are many meaningful roles women may fill, and the discussion should be much more expansive than simply whether or not they may receive ordination.

How would you define the ideal

balance between a Torah and secular education?

I think everybody needs to define it for themselves. It's an exploration process and will be different for different people. There will be inevitable struggles about the subject matter one pursues and the time commitment one gives to each part. I myself was interested in a variety of subjects when I was a student in Yeshiva College, and first tried to do it all. It was overwhelming, but eventually I found a harmony that worked for myself which included YP, night *sefer*, the track team, exercising every night, working as Features Editor for *The Commentator*, and majoring in philosophy. It can be beneficial to consult with the many mentor figures around the *yeshiva*. Ultimately, every student should utilize the rich resources we have here to find the right balance between *Torah u-Madda* that works for them.

Is there a no-women policy in the Glueck building?

There is no such policy. As you can see, several are in my office now, and others teach here in the afternoon.

Are there any general messages or comments you have for the student body?

I worry sometimes about a divide that might be developing between students who see themselves entrenched in the world of the *beis medrash* and those who do not, or if there's a divide between the various Torah programs. It's extremely important that regardless of the track one may be in, everyone should see themselves as *bnei yeshiva* who are part of a larger united institution. Whatever your particular path, you should see yourself as a full-fledged member of this community. No one should ever feel uncomfortable walking into the *beis medrash*, or even the caf. There shouldn't be a feeling that any place here isn't for somebody. I wouldn't want someone, for example, in IBC to feel that the *beis medrash* isn't for them even though they don't have regular *sefer* there.

It used to be that the year in Israel came after a year in YU. This prevented a division into different *yeshiva* alliances, since everyone already saw themselves as students of YU. The labeling and segregation that I fear goes on is dangerous. We are looking into assigning *sganei mashgichim* based on *shiurim* that students now learn in, rather than by *yeshivot* that students attended in Israel. We want to create a common bond now, rather than having students cling exclusively to the nostalgic days of their past.

I'd just like to conclude by saying that it's important for students to come to me to flag issues that I otherwise wouldn't know about. I want to be helpful and I want to be tuned in, and I need students to help me do that.

Rabbi Reiss encourages students to submit questions to him at riets@yu.edu.

Project Kharkov: Influencing Jewish Revival Through Friendship

By JOSH ZIMMERMAN

We were a group of 18 Yeshiva University students embarking on the Center for the Jewish Future's Project Kharkov, a joint service learning mission with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in Kharkov, Ukraine. Despite an extensive three-part orientation prior to departure and a packed itinerary, we had no idea what was really to come. Upon landing in Kharkov after several delays and a missed connecting flight, our group was flooded with flower-shaped balloons, an enormous, colorfully painted welcome banner, and Russian songs in the airport. The Kharkov community sent a small yet energetic constituency to greet us after our draining journey, despite the late arrival. This overwhelming and marvelous introduction to their Jewish community truly set the tone of our entire time abroad.

The ten-day journey passed swiftly despite the jam-packed days. *Team America*, as we called ourselves, sat through several lectures on the history of the Kharkov Jewish community during and after the Soviet Union by the local JDC representatives. We visited a Holocaust memorial site known as Drobitsky Yar and toured both the existing Jewish Community Center and the new one currently under construction. We lunched with groups of senior citizens in their homes and chatted about each others' lives with the assistance of translators. We also donated 15 duffel bags overflowing with collected clothing, blankets and toys that we had gathered during a drive in New York just before our departure.

On Shabbat, our *ruach*-filled songs reverberated throughout the four-story building, followed by meals, educational activities, and discussions. We aided the local Jewish day school, *Shaalavim*, by rebuilding a *bima*, recoating windows to make them winter-durable, and decorating their school with our very own art that we brought and created while in Ukraine. We constantly were rushed on and off the charter bus, slept very little, and yes, ate an excessive number of potatoes.

Every activity organized for *Team America* had numerous local Jewish Ukrainian peers tag along. Their ages varied from young teens to late 20s, and their backgrounds ranged just as much. *What about the language barrier*, you might be wondering. Well, many of the Ukrainians spoke English, or at least understood enough to get by, while their friends served as translators when necessary. Neither group let this natural barrier dampen the mood. Although we were worlds apart, Judaism united the two

groups.

In our final activity as a unified crew, we dined at the city's only kosher restaurant in a lavish banquet style and exchanged gifts. Following the dinner ceremony, the Kharkovians surprised us with authentic horse sleigh rides, spirited slide-shows of our ten-day adventure, and effervescent fireworks, which concluded with an emotional farewell. Hugs were thrown all around; numbers were exchanged; papers with one another's English names were passed around for Facebook purposes. Our trip had come to an end and *Team America* begged the directors for "just another three days." But we knew what we signed up for, and the

to respond, yet my heart ached with empathy.

It was evident that Vitya was not observant and had very little background in Judaism, but he appreciated various Jewish traditions. This was the case for many of the Ukrainian Jews. In many respects, the Ukrainians did not have a holistic appreciation for what Judaism entails. They could not relate to our commitment to *Torah u'mitzvot*, but instead related to Judaism culturally. They loved the traditions and excitement of Purim, and hearing about the serenity of Shabbat. They took pleasure in drawing Israeli flags, *menorahs*, and Jewish symbols. Although Judaism for them is

exceptionally quickly over exciting conversations and work projects. However, I couldn't shake the feeling of wanting to do more.

Vitya returned after attending programs several days in a row bearing a gift for me. Handing me a small magnet, he said shyly, "This is for you." I gave him a giant bear hug; he beamed with joy.

Sensing our last day slowly coming closer and closer, I started mentally preparing a goodbye speech. I wanted to leave him with words of advice. No, I *needed* to leave him with words of advice. When the dreaded "goodbye" moment came, I stumbled on my words and began tearing up instead. I fought through

limited vocabulary, "You guys are really cool." He repeated this sentence multiple times and gave me a hug. This was the very first time he had initiated a hug with me.

After this, he slowly walked away towards the bus back to his home. I quietly sniffled inside my Michelin Man-sized winter coat, looking the opposite way. A few people attempted to console me, but I just needed a moment, that was all. Then, Margot motioned me to turn around. There was Vitya. He had walked about ten or twenty feet, and had stopped to wave once more. Margot and I waved back. He continued on walking backwards waving as he went. After another 40 feet, we gave a final wave and he vanished.

I was encouraged to focus on the positive aspects of meeting this young boy, rather than remaining fixated on the farewell. We had gotten through to him! At least partially, we did. Over the course of the trip, we opened Vitya up and got him to smile, and more. He chatted, laughed, sang and danced on Shabbat just like the rest of us. And wasn't that the point of the entire trip, to meet Jews from other backgrounds and connect through our devotion to our Jewish traditions? We were able to level out the playing field and treat one another like brothers and sisters, without any pretenses getting in the way.

Later that night, Kharkov's JCC Director approached me. Vitya's mother had called her and exclaimed that she had never seen Vitya so happy his entire life as he had been this past week. This was exactly what I needed to hear; as long as he was happy, I was happy.

This trip taught me how to give of myself entirely both when I felt invested in the cause and even when I did not. I had created a friendship with a person in need, a fellow Jew. His mother's phone call made it clear that it wasn't only I who felt the impact. In Kharkov, I had never felt more attached to other Jewish people. They were thirsty for Jewish friendship and direction. These Ukrainian Jews are still persecuted socially for being Jewish. Our Modern Orthodox world does not exist there, which I believe is why we meshed so perfectly. It was necessary for them to witness a group of typical Jews who face family issues, stressful life choices, and internal struggles. We did this without projecting, without even intending or noticing. We traveled hand in hand, often buzzing from the blasted bus music, to each volunteer mission and each learning session as family, as a united Jewish people. In a sense, they were our long-lost siblings we did not know existed, but grew so attached to by the end of our first reunion.



goodbyes were said sadly.

These friendships were the highlight of everyone's trip. But for me, it was one specific friendship I formed while abroad that contributed to its success.

I first introduced myself to Vitya while visiting the city of Poltava. Vitya stood out among the other Jewish peers: he was only fourteen years old and walked around with his head held fairly low, always looking slightly down about life. I politely and curiously inquired about his life. In simple English, he told me that he had grown up in Israel, but moved back to Ukraine with his mother because his father had found a new wife and wanted a new family. He has not spoken to his father in many years, he noted with almost an expressionless utterance.

Vitya did not flinch when he mentioned that no one in his grade speaks to him because he is Jewish. His best friend recently became anti-Semitic and no longer interacts with him either. I did not know what

not rooted in *halacha*, culturally, the passion is clearly there.

After each day ended, I shook Vitya's hand and gave him a gigantic hug, hoping he left as cheerful as possible. I asked him, "Will I see you tomorrow?" He always responded, "Yes, I think. I hope." Each day he returned, and soon he became more and more comfortable around me and the rest of the group. He even began asking me questions. His curiosity about New York never ceased. When I showed him photos of my family and trips I have taken, he had a smile peaking out of his mouth once or twice, as if he couldn't control it. A breakthrough? I definitely felt like one was on the rise.

After spending the day with Vitya and the other Ukrainian peers, I found myself replaying conversations I had had during the day and the projects we had completed. I couldn't stop thinking about the life he was living. True, I and the rest of *Team America*, were bonding

my emotions and told him how glad I was to have met him. I began to speak swiftly, afraid my emotions would not allow me to say all that I wanted. I very quickly expressed my hope that he stay involved with the JCC and how I wished to see him again someday.

Luckily, SCW Junior Margot Reinstein stepped in at exactly that moment. She was the third pea to our little pod: the three of us had become somewhat of a little group. (We even had a name for ourselves, a name Vitya came up with: *V-J-M*.) She articulated much better what I had been trying to say, but I was just glad one of us was able to. Margot conveyed our interest in staying in touch, and how we may be physically leaving him but we'll always be here when he needs us. I interjected, "Cause we're never going to forget you," which brought a few tears to his eyes. He said very little during this short farewell, except for one significant phrase which stood out. He expressed his gratitude using his

Yeshiva Students Attend AEPi Conclave: New Chapter Wins Charity Award

BY MOSHE GENET

Representing Yeshiva University's first fraternity, nine YU students traveled to Tufts University in Boston to participate in the national AEPi conclave of the Northeast. With representative AEPi chapters from over 30 universities, including Harvard, Yale, and Boston University, this was a unique opportunity for the new YU chapter to interact with brothers from other colleges. As the nine proud *kipot*-wearing representatives of Yeshiva, we engaged in many discussions with students on how to maintain their connection to Judaism on the various secular cam-

were able to represent Yeshiva in high regard and bond with our new friends from Tufts. On Shabbat, we were privileged to hear a speech from the Northeast Israeli counsel general and engage in group discussions on how to be a positive role model and strong Jewish leader for the next generation. The conclave had the feel of an NCSY or Bnei Akiva Shabbaton, fostering deep connections between many students. Saturday night featured a Chinese dinner with a comedy show from AEPi alumnus Harrison Greenbaum, and later an event at Club Mantra in Boston.

AEPi distinguishes itself from



uses, and how to fight anti-Israel rhetoric from groups who wished to delegitimize Israel. Not really knowing what to expect from the weekend, we were surprised by the warm reception shown to us by the AEPi of Tufts, as well as the AEPi National Board.

We learned how AEPi wishes to attract Jews from every walk of life, from the most to the least affiliated. While there are many factions in Judaism, the ideals of the fraternity encourage students to take a hands-on approach to their shared Jewish national identity. On many campuses, AEPi runs joint programs with the Chabad and Hillel houses and provides leadership training to create future Jewish leaders. Campus events run by AEPi provide an opportunity for Jews to socialize in an enjoyable environment while forging meaningful connections to their tradition. Over the weekend we also met with representatives of MASA, The David Project, Oranim and Bnai Brith, reflecting AEPi's strong Zionist approach.

On Friday night, we enjoyed a delicious home-cooked meal from the Chabad of Tufts and were able to connect to the students there who had many questions about Yeshiva University. While most of these questions had to deal with the Mac-cabeats, many students were surprised that not all Yeshiva students wish to become Rabbis. During Friday-night Fraternity Games, we

other fraternities by maintaining a strong commitment to Jewish ideals. The formation of a fraternity provides an opportunity for young Jewish men to form *achdut* (brotherhood), with each individual contributing his special talents to the group. While fraternities may share negative stereotypes on campus, the Yeshiva chapter of AEPi has already started its own *tzedakah* (charity) organization, which won an award at the conclave.

The fraternity has also created a big brother program that provides useful guidance to newer students and a shared network of textbooks from older members who wish to pass them on free of charge. Being part of AEPi provides access to a group of friends whom you can count on in all situations, and fills up your calendar with meaningful social events. I was truly touched by the strong connection that AEPi has with Israel, as well as the opening of two new chapters in IDC Herzliya and Hebrew University. As a former soldier in the IDF, I receive a discounted rate on my national dues to AEPi. Having been out of uniform for two years, I missed the structure, camaraderie and unity of my former unit. The connection I have formed with many of my new friends in AEPi has been able to help fill that void and provide support thus far during my college experience.

Hayim Tawil: Akkadian Scholar and Human Rights Activist

BY YONI ZISOOK

Professor Hayim Tawil has spent nearly forty-five years teaching assorted Jewish subjects such as Bible, philology, Hebrew and other Semitic languages to young Jewish men and women. Educated at The Hebrew University, Dropsie College, and The Jewish Theological Seminary, Dr. Tawil was a presidential fellow for three years and ultimately received his Ph.D. in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures from Columbia University in 1972, specializing in Assyriology and Northwest Semitic Languages. He began his teaching career in 1966 at The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), where he spent eighteen years on staff, twelve as an Assistant Professor of Bible. In 1988, Dr. Tawil joined the Yeshiva University faculty as an Associate Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature, and he has been on staff at YU for twenty-two years

since. Tawil also spent considerable time as a guest professor of Classical Languages and Hebrew at City University of New York and Baruch College. Over the course of his YU tenure, he has twice received the Yeshiva College Professor of the Year award (2003 and 2005), a testament to his dedication to education, and especially to his students.

Aside from being a highly popular professor at YU, Professor Tawil is also a world-renowned academic researcher and expert in the fields of philology (the study of linguistics and literary texts), lexicography, (the study and analysis of semantic relationships in language and the act of compiling, writing and editing dictionaries), and Ancient Semitic Languages. Perhaps Dr. Tawil's most prized academic accomplishment thus far is his recently published *An Akkadian Lexical Companion for Biblical Hebrew: Etymological-Semantic and Idiomatic Equivalents With Supplements on Biblical Aramaic* (2009). Dr. Moshe Bar Asher, Professor Emeritus of The Hebrew University, President of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, and Winner of the Israel Prize in 1993, said of Tawil: "The work of Professor Hayim Tawil contributes to the study of the Hebrew Bible and its language at its highest level. His expertise in the Bible, its language, and in the world of the Ancient Near East is apparent from this impor-

tant study. Many idioms and expressions from the Book of Books find their elucidation in Professor Tawil's explications." Dr. William W. Hallo, The William M. Laffan Professor Emeritus of Assyriology



velous study [that] ... explores in an impressive and original manner ... the Jewish community of Aleppo ... and significance of the Crown."

Dr. Tawil has also published over thirty articles on Semitic lexicography and Biblical philology in prestigious journals such as the *Journal of Semitic Studies*, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, *Beit Mikra* and others. These articles are being compiled by his students at Yeshiva College to be published in a separate volume. Tawil is currently working diligently on a new book, *Thematic Interpretation of Song of Songs*.

In addition to his Biblical scholarship and accomplishments, Dr. Tawil is an advocate and international diplomat for the betterment of worldwide Jewry. In 1988, he was appointed chairman of the International Coalition for

the Revival of the Jews of Yemen (ICROJOY). Tawil served as the chairman of the ICROJOY for five years. In 1991, Professor Tawil ultimately secured the release of over 1200 of the last remaining Jews of Yemen; these Jews were completely isolated from the outside world since 1962. In 1998, Professor Tawil published *Operation Esther: Opening the Door for the Last Jews of Yemen*, which chronicled his involvement and experiences helping the stranded Jews of Yemen in the late 1980's and early 1990's. In 2001, Dr. Tawil was nominated for the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award for his humanitarian work in Yemen. Former American Ambassador to Bahrain David M. Ransom proclaimed that Professor Tawil's efforts in Yemen "displays the best of American courage, initiative, hard work, practicality and optimism." Dr. Tawil was also nominated for the Menachem Begin Prize for Israel for his work in Yemen in 2005.

It is truly a privilege to have such an accomplished person, both as an academic and human being, in our Yeshiva University community. Dr. Tawil epitomizes what it means to be a serious scholar, and exemplifies Jewish ideals. The scholarship and achievements of Dr. Tawil add luster to the distinguished character of YU.

African Politics Simulation

continued from front page

In the game, players use peace-keepers and economic points to reconstruct their nation-state while trying to fend off peace-spoilers and sabotage by other players. At the start of each turn, a die roll determines the effects of ethnic violence on each player's nation. The player then allocates the economic points received from foreign aid, or from developing a market economy, to further develop his or her government. The goal of the game is to create a stable enough government and free-market economy to hold successful elections. Michael said of the game development, "Making the game workable and fun took quite a bit of time. Thankfully, the residents of Muss Hall helped me experiment along the way, and made insightful comments."

Michael first envisioned the game for an assignment in Dr. Radziszewski's African Politics course. When the semester ended, Dr. Radziszewski encouraged Michael to continue working on the project and offered to develop the board game with him over the course of an independent study. She commented, "I immediately thought it was a unique idea, the thought of creating a board game to educate people about the complexities of peace management in civil wars intrigued me, and I saw the potential it could have as a dynamic teaching tool. Most of all, I was very excited that a classroom assignment had the potential to turn into something big."

"Without any institutional requirements or benefits incentivizing her many hours of private guidance, Professor Radziszewski continued to work with me to design a classroom simulation and compose a journal entry," said Michael. "All the academic achievements that followed the development of my simulation owe to Professor Radziszewski's patience, care, and vision over the past three years."

Michael commented on his accomplishment, and on the potential of his peers at Yeshiva University, by adding that "a board game was just something unusual I did. Plenty of my peers on campus have similar untapped potential waiting to be unleashed."

According to Dr. Radziszewski, students are often intimidated and anxious when she first asks them to use their creativity to solve a class problem, but she says, "It's not enough these days to just get an 'A' or write a good analytical paper. It's a start, but it is a very dated approach to your college experience. Ask yourself, what can I do with this paper I wrote for my class beyond getting a grade? Can I do more with it? Can I make practical use of it? Be productive and not just active."

What's next for the game? Mi-

BY DAVID BARRIS

As we exited the run-down airport, I immediately realized that we weren't in Kansas anymore. Within seconds, a group of entrepreneurial locals approached us, desperately trying to peddle their wares. A man no more than 2 feet tall slid by on a skateboard using his left hand to propel himself forward and his right to sell pens.

Welcome to Guatemala City.

The sights and sounds of this Central American hub were unlike any city I had previously visited. The group I was traveling with included nine members of FIMRC (Foundation for International Medical Relief of Children), a global health club that operates on both Wilf and Beren Campuses. Led by co-presidents Dani Schoenfeld, Marc Elman, and Shara Feltheimer, the YU club operates as a branch of the global FIMRC organization. Our branch runs global health related events and fundraisers on behalf of the organization.

At the airport, we saw a group of drivers huddled off to the side, one of whom was holding a sign that read "Yeshiva University." That driver was Nixon, a man of roughly 40, with a firm mustache and perfectly groomed hair. After Nixon loaded all 18 of our bags onto the roof of his van, we exited the airport. During the ride, several of us shifted uneasily in our seats, frequently checking to make sure our bags had not slid off of the roof.

Over the course of the drive, Nixon proceeded to tell us about the rich history of Guatemala. Those of us who had read Guatemala's Wikipedia page before the trip nodded in agreement as Nixon described its rich Mayan heritage that had been merged with the traditions of the Spanish conquistadors. This theme of cultural dissonance was further evident as Nixon pointed out murals on the city walls. These frescoes depicted the barbaric massacres of villages during the civil war between the guerrilla movement and Guatemalan government in the 70s and 80s. Hearing this disturbing history from Nixon, a native Guatemalan who experienced this civil war first hand, made it all the more real and close to home.

We were fortunate to arrive in Guatemala City on Sunday, a day of the week known in Guatemala as Family Day. Indeed, families were spending time together in the central park, riding horses and jumping on trampolines. After driving on a road that wound through the mountainside, a neat grid of multicolored houses appeared in the distance. We had arrived in Antigua, a quaint mountainside city frequented by tourists and home to 40,000 native

chael and Dr. Radziszewski will try to propose *Peacekeeping, The Game* to organizations that publish simulations such as this one, and to have it incorporated into international relations classrooms across the world.

Global Health in Guatemala

Guatemalans. The city was quietly perched between the Agua (water) and Fuego (fire) volcanoes, each looming majestically in the distance. This was the perfect location to base our operation: a beautiful city, which was both safe and close enough to the surrounding villages and medical clinics where we would be volunteering.

The FIMRC presidents coordinated our itinerary and volunteering schedule with an organization called Maximo Nivel. The organization provided us with a translator and acted as a bridge between us and the schools and medical clinics that we came to assist. Our translator/coordinator was a native Guatemalan woman who, coincidentally, bore a Hebrew name, Magdiel. Magdiel transcended the role of translator and acted as a "cultural diffusion facilitator," and just as importantly, a friend.

Our volunteering opportunities and locations were broken up into mornings and afternoons. In the morning, we had the privilege of assisting two radically different medical clinics. The first clinic was located in San Juan Comalapa. This facility was created in the aftermath of a 1976 earthquake and played a major role in providing health care to the surrounding villages during the civil war in the 70s and 80s. Unfortunately, most of the clinic's medical equipment and supplies originate from those decades as well. Without a

permanent doctor on the staff, the facility relies on doctors who work pro-bono for short stints. Our group had the privilege of shadowing and assisting Dr. Mario Morfin, who studied medicine in San Carlos University in Guatemala City. Watching Dr. Morfin diagnose ailments was like watching Fox's "House" with a twist: Dr. Morfin was forced to diagnose with only the clinic's primitive tools and his own investigative questions. Dr. Morfin was forced to fight another battle as well. Most, if not all, of his patients were indigenous Mayans who would rather use the alternative medicine of a witch doctor than rely upon modern medicine. Watching Dr. Morfin confront these patients was like watching years of dogmatic battles come to life.

The second clinic we visited, located in Santa Catarina Barahona, was far better equipped. Our group took part in a parasite prevention campaign by giving 70 children routine physicals and administering parasite medication. After all the

medical work was finished we got down to business and taught the kids some classic American games, such as "red light green light," "duck, duck goose," and "Simon says."

Aside from one afternoon spent hiking up Mount Pacaya, an active volcano, our time after lunch was spent running educational programs in the impoverished villages surrounding Antigua. Personally, most of my Spanish experience prior to this trip was limited to the card game UNO. Somehow, with the help of Magdiel, we were able to successfully create and present three presentations – all in Spanish – that were both educational and humorous. The first presentation focused on dental hygiene, the second on general hygiene, and the third on nutrition. Following the presentations, we split the children into groups to learn a bit more about them personally and to assist them in making nutrition related arts-and-crafts projects. By the time we visited our sixth village we had the process

simple happiness on the impoverished children's faces put terms such as gratitude and resilience into perspective. The impact of these interactions on my own outlook was tremendous. I think I can safely say that I will never think about the term "sameach bechelko" [happy with one's lot] in the same way.

After a long and intense week we were more than ready to experience Shabbat back in Guatemala City with the local Chabad. The city we encountered was not the carefree utopia that we had seen on Family Day, as this second glance revealed severe societal blemishes. Almost every store, no matter how mundane the merchandise, was protected by a security guard holding a shotgun. Every house was built as a fortress designed to keep out intruders. Walking home from shul on Friday night truly scared allowed us to appreciate the sacrifice that the Chabad Rabbi and his wife make by keeping their family there. Thank G-d, Shabbat passed without



down to a science, from the Spanish punch lines all the way down to coloring the fruit in the lines.

The 250 children who we presented to were unique, a group like none that we had previously encountered in our collective experiences. We were notified prior to our visits that the parents of many of the children commute to Guatemala City or the United States for long periods of time, leaving the children to fend for themselves and as many as ten siblings. Given this information, we expected to encounter a rough and disorganized bunch, perhaps slightly frustrated with the unfortunate hand they had been dealt. We could not have been more wrong. The children sat huddled together on the dirt floors of the cramped schoolhouses, patiently listening and hanging onto every word that came out of our mouths. The children were so appreciative of the fact that we were there and were delighted by the smallest gestures, such as a piece of candy, a high five or even just a smile. The

incident and we were all ready to learn about the larger Jewish community on Sunday morning. Aside from an Ashkenazi shul, a beautiful Sephardic synagogue is still used in downtown Guatemala City. It was inspiring to see Jews inspired by, and true to, their tradition even in this precarious area.

As a whole, the trip was a resounding success. As a group, we were able to impart health related information onto the children of the villages, who in turn imparted onto us a valuable world perspective about resilience and happiness. The group was so struck with the kindness and altruism exhibited by the San Juan Comalapa clinic that we have started an initiative to raise funds and supplies for the clinic's use. This trip proved invigorating for the members of the FIMRC and we hope to follow it up with several meaningful events over the course of the semester.

Budget Cuts Hit Athletics Department

By CHANAN MARGOLIS

Unfortunately, we are all too familiar with the unpleasant ramifications of the recent economic crisis. Between the scarcity of free YU paraphernalia and the nonfulfillment of the promise to create a fully “wireless YU,” we have all felt the impact in some way. It perhaps comes as no surprise then to hear that the suffering economy has afflicted yet another painful blow on our university: the Athletics department. A group of women interested in playing on a Women’s Softball team were recently disappointed to

hear that they would not have the opportunity to be members of a new Maccabees team. After lining up an equipment supplier, interested students with talent and dedication, and a coach, the Athletics Department was forced to cancel all plans for the new team. The department was informed that there would be severe budget cuts taking effect this fall, thereby preventing it from starting new programs.

Budget cuts are nothing new to the Athletics Department; this will be the third time in four years that the department’s budget has been reduced. In the two previous cutbacks,

Joe Bednarsh, Athletics Director, was able to save most of the existing programming and staffing. Although he would like to accomplish the same this time, he admits that the cuts will be much more significant than before and many will be unhappy with the necessary changes. His utilitarian considerations in determining how to best allocate the limited resources of his department include thinking about how to inconvenience as few people as possible and how to keep the inconvenience as small as possible. The Athletics Department includes both Recreation (exercise room, pool, in-

tramurals) and Athletics (the official Yeshiva University teams). While Athletics publicly represents Yeshiva University, it directly serves fewer people than Recreation and will therefore likely suffer larger cuts.

The pool, hot tub, sauna, and steam room on the Wilf Campus are beloved not only for their exercise benefits but as a relaxation destination after a long day of classes as well. A very popular relief, after finishing class late in the evening, is to head over to the recreation centre for a pool party and to hang out in the hot tub. The weight room, track, and gymnasium are consistently occupied late into the night by students burning off their pent-up restlessness accumulated by sitting through a dual curriculum of classes. These integral parts of the recreation available to students are expected to be open for fewer hours each day in order to save money.

The athletics program at YU has been steadily increasing in size and improving in quality. When Bednarsh became the Athletics Director, we had eight men’s teams and three women’s teams; now we have nine men’s teams and six women’s teams. The proposed Women’s Softball team would have helped draw the number of teams even closer to an equal distribution between the campuses. Additionally, in the past year the Maccabees have won two championships in the Hudson Valley Men’s Athletic Conference, several sportsmanship awards, and a NECVA Team Academic Award. Due to the new budget cuts, no new teams will be created and some existing ones may be cancelled. A difficult decision facing the Athletics Department is whether to keep the same number of teams but diminish some of the perks of being on those teams, or to cut some teams to maintain the quality of the remaining teams. Although several proposals have been drafted, none have been approved. Bednarsh says he “would like to involve students in the decision-making process as much as possible.”

A significant expense of our Athletics Department is the large redundancy of costs that is created by having two campuses. This problem is exacerbated by religious restrictions burdening the Athletics Department. It was suggested to allow the women’s teams to practice in the MSAC on the Wilf Campus to reduce the expenses of those teams that must pay both to rent an off-campus facility and for transportation for each practice. This seemingly clever proposal was rejected because it is not considered consistent with the philosophy of the institution. (Is this

another example of YU’s “Y” influencing the Athletics Department? See “Torah u-Martial Arts?” in issue 75.2.) Hosting the women’s teams’ games in the MSAC could also help solve several of our female athletes’ frustrations. Sarit Zukowsky, a sophomore volleyball player, believes that our women’s teams are at a disadvantage because they don’t have a true “home court.” “Even at the place they call our ‘home court,’ we practice in a different gym than where we play the games. There



“Once You’ve Wrestled, Everything Else in Life is Easy”

By JEREMY SCHWARTZ

Writing for Yeshiva Athletics can be very challenging. However, it can help develop an important character trait, assuming that “finding the positive in every situation” is something to strive for. YU has no more than two programs with a winning record and most well below .500. Granted, by most measures of a successful collegiate program, YU cannot boast much. However, I think that many teams still go underappreciated, and #1 on that list is wrestling.

To be blunt, wrestling takes a lot of heat because of the singlets they wear. One would think an all-male undergraduate college would take to wrestling better, but this doesn’t seem to be the case. With all the humor surrounding wrestling, many are blind to the seriousness of the sport.

In college, wrestling lasts three periods; the first is three minutes long, and the last two are both two minutes. While this sounds like a short period of time, wrestlers use almost every muscle in their body for the entire match. Constant grappling and maneuvering takes both a physical and mental toll. To wrestle at a competitive level, you must be in excellent physical condition and have experience with various moves and counters. Wrestlers utilize brute strength while staying quick, agile, and explosive.

One can make the argument that wrestling is the ultimate individual sport. There is nobody to help the lone wrestler as he fights on the mat. But teams wrestle each other, and as there are 10 weight classes (125, 133, 141, 149, 157, 165, 174, 184, 197, 285 lbs), it takes an exceptionally deep and talented team to excel. Baseball requires one good pitcher and a mediocre team to win and basketball can win with two exceptional players. However, two good wrestlers on a team usually mean



nothing.

Yeshiva Wrestling began their season this year at the Cyclone Open. Highlights included Gregory Kupsin, who advanced to the quarterfinals in the 174 lb. weight class by pinning his first opponent after 4:08 and his next by points, 5-3; and Ron Simchi, wrestling in the 149 lb. weight class, who pinned his first opponent in 0:55 and won his next match 5-2 (but was cut short after being pinned in his third match of the day).

A tri-match against Bergen CC and Scranton featured an outstanding comeback by Ron Simchi who was down by 1 point with just seconds left. After scoring a take-down and secured back points, he gained victory in the 149 lb. weight class. Eli Fuld took a victory in the 165 lb. weight class and Gregory Kupsin won his match against both schools.

In a tri-match against Trinity and Springfield Technical CC, Yeshiva had victories from Eli Fuld (165 lb.) and Ramin Ahdoot (133 lb.).

Versus Centenary College and Muhlenberg College, Yeshiva had victories from Ramin Ahdoot (133 lb.), Ron Simchi (157 lb.), and Eli Fuld (174 lb.).

While Yeshiva has yet to win a match this year, Head Coach Neil

Elman insists his team is doing well. “Due to Title IX rules, they’ve eliminated about 20 schools we can play. So who’s left? We are always playing teams nationally ranked. If I can have my team from the last 3-4 years, 20 years ago, I’d have gone to the Division III NCAA Championships.”

Boris Tuman, a sophomore from Cleveland, OH, says that a hard fought individual match has no bearing on the score of the overall meet. “A player can lose by one point but as for the meet score, the winner gets six points and the loser gets zero. It doesn’t take into account how close the match is.” With this in mind, Yeshiva will continue working hard, practicing 3-6 times a week, depending on the workload of the dual-curriculum undertaken by Yeshiva students. For now, eyes will be on the future as Yeshiva University hosts the annual Wittenburg Tournament at the end of February. The tournament features the best Yeshiva High Schools in America and lasts for three days. More than half of Yeshiva’s wrestlers have wrestled at Wittenburg, and the tournament is a good preview for how the wrestling program will take shape in the next few years.

A Review of *Decisions Points*, by George W. Bush

By JONATHAN SCHWAB

George W. Bush's recently published memoir offers fascinating insight into the 43rd president and his White House. Unchronologically arranged, the book is loosely organized around fourteen critical moments of decision for him, from personal struggles like quitting drinking to policy determinations like those he made on stem cell research and in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the September 11th attacks.

The tone of the book is mostly upbeat: Bush sprinkles jokes throughout, noting several times his "needling" of family, colleagues, and close friends. He also consistently and carefully describes others' characters. For Bush, evaluating the personalities with which he came in contact was of utmost importance, and he is frank about his conclusions, calling former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon a "bull of a man," and former Russian President Vladimir Putin "sometimes cocky, sometimes charming, always tough."

This reflects Bush's general approach to leadership that becomes obvious through the book: Bush consistently sought the advice of others but unabashedly recounts ultimately relying on his own personal judgment. For his decision on stem cell research, he consulted with everyone from Leon Kass, an academic bioethicist, to Pope John Paul II.

But in the end, Bush says, his August 2001 announcement that federal funds could be "used for research on [existing] stem cells lines" was purely his decision. For many such pivotal moments, Bush recounts his advisors (often exhaustively in footnoted lists), but Bush is clear that he and he alone was responsible for his decisions.

His ability to make decisions, readers can gather from his memoir, draws equally from two very different sources. His deeply religious background and devotion to daily routines – not just Bible study but also jogging – gave him a strong background, and his extensive reading – he claims to have read during his two terms fourteen different biographies of Abraham Lincoln – and well-picked colleagues helped him crystallize his thinking. The impression given by the book does not so much change the popular vision of Bush as a man of the gut, of deep religious belief, and of Texas machismo, as it does add some characteristics to this perception.

Bush answers early and often to his detractors, clarifying "media mistakes" he felt unfairly portrayed him. The infamous "Mission Accomplished" banner, he says, was never intended to imply that the war was won or democracy achieved in Iraq but rather to congratulate the USS Lincoln on returning from a 10-month deployment. On the other hand, he does acknowledge his

administration's missteps: though in recounting the response to Hurricane Katrina, he points to state and city disorganization, he says, "I should have recognized the deficiencies sooner and intervened faster."

There is no love lost between Bush and modern American political media in his narrative. "Twenty-four-hour cable news and hyperpartisan political blogs," he says, are responsible for a "toxic atmosphere in American politics." He quotes criticisms of his decisions from the right and the left, saying that others tried to capitalize on their own reputations by labeling him a Nazi, recruiting "well-meaning" Hollywood stars to "tug at heartstrings," and generally resorting to highly personal criticism. The "death spiral of decency" which came during his time in office, Bush says, was discouraging many good candidates from ever running for office.

Probably the most interesting part of the book to the majority of readers is that containing Bush's conclusions regarding the Iraq war. Though he still insists that the intelligence at the time pointed to the existence of weapons of mass destruction, Bush says he has a "sickening feeling" that they were never found. He does however, insist that Saddam Hussein's removal was the right decision and he would do it again. Bush also cites as his single greatest achievement as president that after the "nightmare of Septem-

ber 11th, America went seven and a half years (under his leadership) without another successful attack."

The chapter he devotes to the September 11th attacks is the most moving in the book. He describes in vivid detail his own experience on the "Day of Fire," recounting the emotions he felt when hearing of the second plane and famously continuing with a reading lesson at an elementary school. The third plane, which hit the Pentagon was, in his mind, "a declaration of war, and [his] blood was boiling." He

speaks of struggling between those two opposites of emotion: on the one hand, trying to comfort the American people and empathize with the horror and fear, and on the other, taking meaningful action against those who attacked America. Though the end result does lean toward the latter, Bush does not come across as heartless but rather as listening to a call from the American

DECISION POINTS



GEORGE W. BUSH

people for righteous justice.

That is an apt description for most of *Decision Points*: Bush at times comes off as a gunslinger and at times a Bible-slinger, but throughout tries to justify his decisions by citing guiding principles of American history. Though his defensiveness makes him seem at points even guiltier, he ultimately succeeds in his stated goals: to provide his own perspective on the eight Bush years.

My No-Longer-Scary Chemical Romance

Review of *Danger Days: The True Lives of the Fabulous Killjoys*

By BENJAMIN ABRAMOWITZ

No matter how much you like the songs on *Welcome to the Black Parade*, there are certain elements of the album that just make you uncomfortable. There are catchy tunes, vocals so expressive that you're either screaming along or speechless, and more than enough variety to make you able to listen to the whole album from start to finish without feeling forced. But then there are the weird parts, like furious outbursts that make you fear for your life if your volume is just a bit too loud; two-second-long squeaky noises

that you can re-listen too *ad infinitum* and still find yourself unable to determine if they're supposed to be human, animal, or synthesized; and messages that make you question your very identification with punk rock or whatever now-freakish genre this falls into. It's the sort of thing you like until you realize they were being serious.

Black Parade, still, has a few remarkable songs, but My Chemical Romance's new album, *Danger Days: The True Lives of the Fabulous Killjoys*, provides similar enjoyment—but without the angst-ridden undertones (and overtones) that make you reassess your mental health. MCR's new songs are animated, meaningful, catchy—and happy.

With its gratuitous first title, "Na Na Na (Na Na Na Na Na Na Na Na Na)" (this is MCR—who needs moderation? Or words? The right noises, in excess, will do just fine) the album kicks off explosively. The song

is energetic and all over the place: punkish, pop-rocky, electronic, and fast to its finish. Its abrupt conclusion makes the start of the next track, "Bulletproof Heart," which is slower and more pensive, all the more appreciable. This song ends up a bit less novel, characterized by a sound that's just a bit too teen-pop-rock-like, but doesn't detract from the rest of the album.

"Sing" stands out not only for its appealing tune and meaningful lyrics, but because it embodies the transition from the old MCR to the new. One gets the feeling that the darkness is deliberate, maybe even contrived, and that the musicians are confronting it with some degree of rigor. This replaces their previous musical tradition of wallowing in that darkness, growing confused from its midst, and ultimately, freaking out entirely (the still-excellent "Dead!") is a great example of this). "Sing" emerges from its own self-aware dreariness, growing upbeat and positive, urging listeners to break their own boundaries. And once you've broken those, dance to the heavily electronic "Planetary (GO!)," both joyful and reflective. It's a bit out of place, somewhat mindless in its jump-up-and-down-nonstop feel, but incredibly fun to

listen to.

If you needed better proof that MCR is now cheery, the band just received a celebratory tribute on *Glee*. In Season 2, Episode 13, the cast covers "Sing," selected by Sue to reflect her triumph over her (maniacal) depression. The cast's performance is spectacular. It captures the dark, more classically rebellious outset of the piece, with its shadowy lighting and the cast's adolescently defiant garb. The understated beginning abruptly gives rise to a fierce whirlwind of Lea Michele and co., as everyone runs and jumps about the stage in an unabashedly less-than-coordinated romp. Sitting with legs dangling over the edge of the stage, they conclude the performance exhausted, but thrilled.

The performance effectively captures the song's sense of seeing through the darkness and eventually bursting out of it. It's a far cry from the angry, if melodious, sloshing and slashing that characterizes MCR's previous album. If the irri-

tatingly optimistic Will Schuster approves the song, you can be sure My Chemical Romance has made some big-time changes.

The album itself can get aggravating, both starting off with a verbal introduction marked as a separate song and containing similar short bits as interjections between songs. No one wants to listen to that. And when not juxtaposed to a specific song—namely, if the verbal interjection pops up on your iTunes shuffle—it's totally annoying and pointless.

After all is said and done, *Danger Days* is completely different from *Black Parade*, but still far from completely angst-less. It's a post-angst celebration, buoyant and motivating, yet aware of where it's coming from. They've just finally freed themselves, and one gets the feeling that the aphoristic proclamations often contained within the lyrics are epiphanies at which they have only just arrived. Don't worry if it's taken you this long to wake up; My Chemical Romance just did too.



Everyone's an Artist: Review of *Exit Through the Gift Shop*

By DAVID SHINEFIELD

Artistic expression inherently progresses through different movements in its response to the reality of an ever-changing culture. From cave paintings to Impressionism, our view of what represents us artistically has certainly not stayed constant throughout the centuries. Art has never been more accessible to the masses than it has become through the contemporary medium of Street Art. This paradigm shift in the artistic arena is excellently depicted in "Exit Through the Gift Shop" a documentary of one man's journey to the top of Street Art prestige.

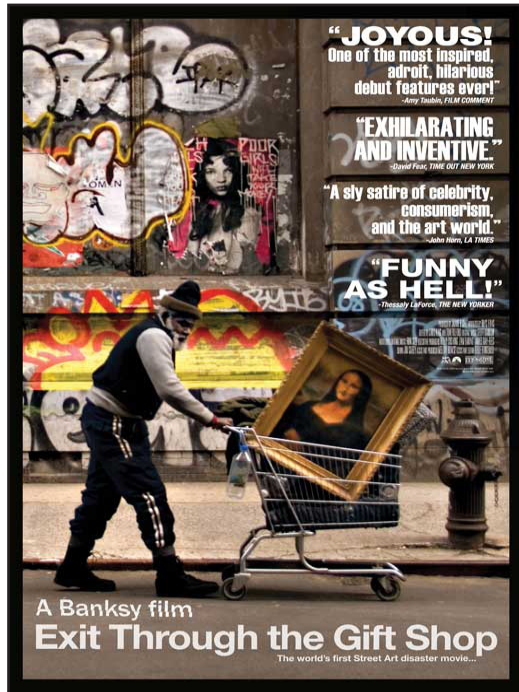
"Exit Through the Gift Shop" opens with an interview of Banksy, one of the most influential street artists to date. Banksy has hung his art around the world in various public domains including billboards, outside building walls and even in museums as faux pieces of an exhibit. Despite their innovative forms of expression and general esteem in the public arena, Banksy and other street artists have *not* been well received by the police, and acquiring a list of arrests has become somewhat part of the job description. This genre of art is specifically of a counter-culture and sometimes illegal nature, and a large majority of these works, we learn in the documentary, are satires of famous icons, portraits and landscapes, presenting a militant "counter-industry" perspective. A telling example of this art is Banksy's famous rendition of Samuel L. Jackson and John Travolta, the two main protagonists of Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*, in which they stand in their regular pose, in place of each of their guns, a banana.

Though it might seem that these

street artists would in and of themselves provide fascinating enough material for a documentary, Banksy makes a point of informing the audience that this movie is not about him and his community of artists. The man the documentary is actually about is Thierry Guetta, a French immigrant who lives and works in Los Angeles. Thierry made his entrance into the world of street art when he, hoping to find something interesting to document with his newly purchased video camera, filmed the work of his French cousin, a street artist with the pseudonym "Invader." From there, Thierry's fascination with street art (or perhaps his infatuation with a way to express his artistic dream) led him to Shepard Fairey, the creator of the famous Obama "Hope" portrait whose work has been featured at Boston's prestigious Institute of Contemporary Art. Thierry spent the next few months following and recording different street artists as they stealthily hung their work at nighttime. Eventually, he met Banksy, who was initially intrigued by Thierry's project. Banksy lost all interest in him once Thierry unveiled the poorly made documentary he had thus far compiled of thousands of hours of self-recorded street art footage. Banksy suggested that Thierry go and make his own art. This point in the story does not occur until half way through the film, but it is here that Thierry's unusual success truly begins to unfold.

Throughout the film Thierry is depicted as an eccentric man. Banksy states several times that he is unsure as to whether Thierry is extremely talented and commit-

ted, or incredibly stupid and crazy (though at times, he openly considers that Thierry may be a combination of both). Between the poor film production and lack of concrete purpose, Thierry's documentary certainly suggests that he has no previously explored artistic ability. Thierry, being the steadfast and eccentric man that he is, immediately returned from England, where Banksy resides, to Los Angeles, where he invested all of his assets in the development of his street art persona,



MBW (Mr. Brain Wash.)

Thierry's avid self-promotion drew a crowd almost overnight. He spent weeks laboring over the intricate details of his very first exhibit. His efforts did not go unnoticed, local papers started to syndicate the upcoming event, and suddenly Thierry was the talk of the town.

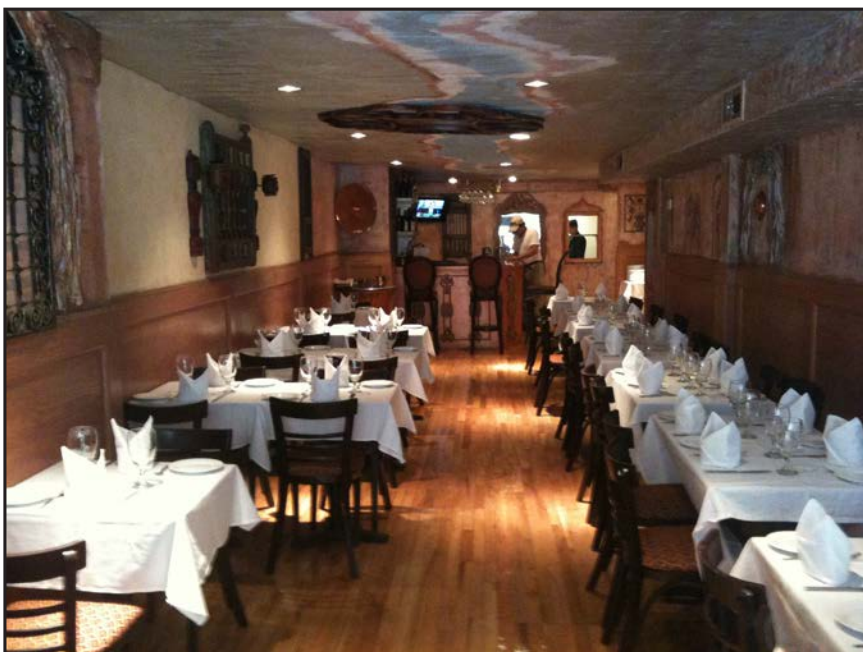
To this day, Thierry is one of the most famous street artists, his success oddly sprouting forth from a complete lack of experience and an overwhelming naïveté towards the world of art. Comparing Thierry in the beginning of the film to Thierry at the end shows little divergence in character. It may be because he is a simple man, but he displays the same sense of confusion and wandering now that he did before he was famous. While he is now acknowledged as a famous artist it is still apparent in the eyes of other street artists that Thierry has no idea what he is doing. Shepard Fairey is recorded as saying that he completely dislikes Thierry's work and feels that he continues to make his art simply in reaction to the shock of being recognized as an artist.

Thierry's success comes with fascinating and even frightening implications for the artistic world. Most of his work is produced by hired hands (as Thierry, has very little technical artistic talent), though he does dictate what is to be made. Thierry seems to invalidate the novelty of art. If one can gain recognition through mere replication of previously produced art then perhaps art has lost some of the deeper meaning it once possessed. While art is considered to be an expression of the self, thus which implying implies that anyone and everyone everyone and anyone can be involved, the distinction between what is presentable and what is not has always been a discriminating factor. With

Street Art it is becoming increasingly more difficult to identify the line between fine art—and Arts & Crafts. Through the sudden pervasion of this egalitarian Street Art, those that most would consider non-artists are further securing the ability and public permission to produce what was once designated for a select few. This very well may be what the title "Exit Through the Gift Shop" refers to. Art has become more of a gift shop than an esoteric medium of expression. In fact, bastardizations of many famous works of art are often sold within a museum's gift shop. There seems to be little worth left to art.

However, this new perspective on art is not necessarily entirely negative. Perhaps the opening and inclusion of the greater population into the world of artistic creation will yield positive ramifications. While art may begin to be increasingly viewed through the scope of pop culture, and like modern media, we may begin to appreciate it less, simply because there is so much of it and it is so repetitive, (after all, how many previews for Hollywood movies do we watch that appear to be utterly entirely identical to the one before it) the increased access of these talents may create a sudden surge, a renaissance if you may, of art throughout the world. Just as great advances and inventions were discovered through the Renaissance, this period of art may present us with a sudden opportunity to greatly excel beyond the achievements we have made up until now. With more involvement comes more opportunity to expand. Perhaps Thierry is part of an elite group of revolutionists who will bring us into a new golden age of art and technology.

Featured Restaurant: Shalom Bombay



By NATHANIEL JARET

While it may provide students with that late-night fix, one should hope that Golan Heights does not represent the final word in their experiences of fine dining. New York

City boasts an ocean of Kosher culinary offerings, and occasionally, a Zaide's laffa cannot satisfy the urge we hopefully all experience for more civilized repasts (you have some chummus on your nose). Well fear not, my until-now-proletariat

statue dedicated to Vishnu or honoring some sacred mythical elephant, the owners, presumably cognizant of the religious sentiments of their patrons, steered clear of the Hinduisms. In Shalom Bombay, the

feeders, delicious exoticisms are only a shid-duch shuttle away! Shalom Bombay, a *fleishig* Indian restaurant on Lexington & 39th specializing in Tandoori and Punjabi cuisine, offers Kosher diners both a most pleasant atmosphere and a delectable array of exotic dishes, securing the establishment's place amongst the better in Manhattan.

The first thing I noticed in Shalom Bombay was that unlike most Indian restaurants in which I have eaten at, where almost every inch of wall space supports a placard or statue dedicated to Vishnu or honoring some sacred mythical elephant, the owners, presumably cognizant of the religious sentiments of their patrons, steered clear of the Hinduisms. In Shalom Bombay, the

adornments were simple, and the styling, clean and elegant without being overly continentally familiar. The lighting was dimmed but not foreboding, and the levels of noise, manageable despite the small, rather narrow physical layout. Beren's chunk of Lexington Avenue already boasts a handful of Kosher *dairy* Indian eateries down the upper twenties, and Shalom Bombay, a meat restaurant with Glatt Kosher supervision from the OU, admirably complements that strip (and provides a more recognizable *hekhsher*, for those concerned).

Shalom Bombay's menu is intuitively arranged and well-balanced, offering an impressive but not overbearing array of appetizers, soups, chicken, beef, lamb, and vegetarian Indian specialties.

The "Papri Chaat," a mild appetizer of crispy Indian crackers (kinda like the egg noodles you get to dip in duck sauce at Chinese restaurants, but much tastier) arranged in a small bowl with (pareve) sour cream, potatoes and onions, and two

dipping chutneys. The dish is tasty and intriguing, though certainly not something you can devour heaps of (nor are you meant to). The "Mixed Kabab Platter," an aromatic and aesthetically impressive plate of three meats (chicken, beef, and lamb) marinated each in its own sauce and roasted in the *tandoor*, the restaurant's specialty clay oven, are another excellent choice. The meats, varying in flavor and intensity, were succulent and juicy—the chicken, of the three, stood out as an obvious winner.

For a more generic (though also delicious) appetizing experience, either the vegetable or beef samosas, the Indian variant of the fried wonton, are stuffed with a delicious mixture of vegetables and/or beef, and accompanied with delicious chutneys for dipping. My fingers may or may not have ventured once or twice into the tamarind sauce. And the mint chutney.

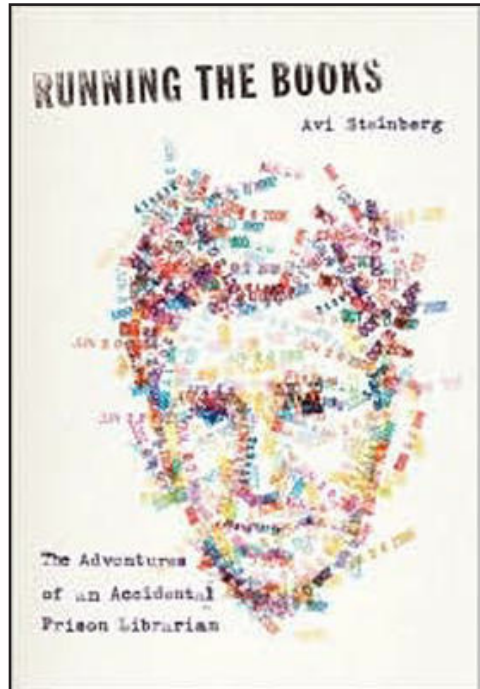
The main dishes were no less

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From Gush to YU to Harvard to Prison: The Odyssey of Avi Steinberg

By MICAH STEIN

Avi Steinberg's story is not what you might call...*typical*. After graduating from Harvard with a degree in English literature and a half-serious thesis analyzing the "signifiers of Bunnyness" in Bugs Bunny films, Steinberg finds himself marginally employed as an obituary writer for the Boston Globe, searching for direction and health insurance. Frustrated with his dead-end career and



ings in prison.

Running the Books manages to offer a fresh perspective on the intimate and the strange. Steinberg's personal history as "a big time Orthodox failure" plays a recurring role, casting the author as somewhat of a social outcast and reframing many of our own familiar practices. Meanwhile, his job in the prison library is a constant source of strange and surprising material, from the potential weapons lurking in a library ("A floppy disk? Easily outfitted into a switchblade.") to the inmate entertainment schedule ("At 9 P.M. all the inmates gather in front of TVs - self-segregated by race - to watch Prison Break.").

A product of the modern Orthodox educational system, Steinberg attended the Fuchs Mizrahi School in Cleveland, Maimonides High School in Boston, Yeshivat Har Etzion, and Yeshiva University before transferring to Harvard after his freshman year. He is now openly (and avidly) secular, extremely well-versed in Jewish texts and culture but uninterested in any manner of practice.

This religious detachment produces a number of spot-on – and often hilarious – depictions of the Orthodox lifestyle. Describing the scene at a former classmate's wedding, Steinberg attempts to capture the joy of a Jewish wedding: "When the Rabbi says, 'you must make the bride and groom happy,' it means you make them delirious until they're pummeled within an inch of their lives and left for dead by the side of the dance floor... These are not polite circle dances, these are hard-driving, frenetic, Darwinian merry-go-rounds of testosterone."

At that same wedding (which he attends with the aid of "a pipe of medicinal pot"), Steinberg is bombarded with personal questions from one of his former Rabbis. The

encounter plays out brazenly: "No, I confessed, I did not pray or put on *tefillin*. No, I did not observe Shabbat or keep kosher. And yes, I added, unprompted, I loved shrimp. *Loved it!* They should serve it at shmorgs."

Beyond this open penchant for shellfish, Steinberg finds himself guilty of "a sin graver even than religious treachery" in the Jewish community – "professional inadequacy." As he explains for the skeptical reader: "My yeshiva high school's basketball team was named not the Tigers or the Hawks, but the MCATS. As in, the Medical College Admission Test."

Steinberg frames his foray into the penal system in Biblical terms: "Abraham did time; Joseph did time; Jeremiah did time; Daniel did time. So did Samson. Both Moses and Elijah were fugitives for committing murder. The prophet Hosea had a notorious predilection for hookers. Nearly every single one of the prophets was either a criminal or had spent time among criminals."

Neither prophet nor criminal, Steinberg instead plays the role of observer and ally. His experiences reflect the upturned moral hierarchy of prison, where inmates – guilty of some legitimately heinous crimes – become Steinberg's employees and students, while the prison guards often play the role of schoolyard bully. In the most absurd episode, a particularly obnoxious guard saunters into the library during a movie showing of *Romeo + Juliet* for the sole purpose of unleashing a vicious fart spray, scattering the prisoners and enraging the librarians.

Steinberg seeks to make the library into a welcoming space for prisoners, relaxing many of the rigid rules governing inmate conduct and breaking a few of those rules himself. But they are still in prison, and his library patrons remain convicts. This tension reveals itself when Steinberg presents an elderly inmate with a contraband birthday cupcake, but then must watch him eat it to ensure that the gift doesn't become valuable prison currency. Ultimately, the experience proves degrading for both men.

Such glimpses of humanity serve to highlight the oppressive sadness of prison. One prisoner confides, "Any inmate who tells you he didn't cry when he first came to prison is a liar," and Steinberg himself is no exception. He breaks down after two especially promising inmates – Jessica, a heroin addict seeking to reconcile with her son, and Chudney, an aspiring chef with intricate plans to host an urban cooking show called *Thug Sizzle* – both end up dead shortly after their release. Our librarian initiates himself into "that ancient club: those who cry alone in the darkness of prison."

His work in the library introduces us to the unique subculture of prison, a place with its own dialect, social hierarchy, and power structure. Beyond the obvious function as a book repository, the library serves as a multipurpose room in prison. For prisoners, the countless books become impromptu mailboxes to transfer "kites" – illicit notes between prisoners. After each group of prisoners leaves the library, Steinberg searches under shelves and flips through books to uncover these contraband kites, though he allows some particularly juicy ones to pass through.

Within the confines of prison, Steinberg interacts with a tame inmate population, cowed by watchful guards and worn down from years of lock-up. Some of the most troubling episodes in the book occur *outside* the prison walls. Following a chance meeting at Dunkin' Donuts, Steinberg breaks one of his self-made rules and sits down for coffee with two former prisoners ("in *Dunkin' Donuts*, all bets are off," he explains), relishing the opportunity to finally utilize his...prison language skills ("pimp banter was really the only perk of my job"). Soon, that initial novelty gives way to disgust when Steinberg pieces together the situation: he's having coffee with – and implicitly empowering – a violent pimp.

This eye-opening encounter leads Steinberg to reconsider his relationship with some library patrons, including "balding pimp memoirist"

CC Too Sweet. Steinberg had done extensive editing on *Too Sweet's* autobiography, a painful tale of childhood abuse and adult misbehavior – and an unabashed ode to the pimp lifestyle. Steinberg eventually discovers that the would-be author has in fact been convicted of kidnapping, raping, and prostituting a fourteen-year-old girl. He abruptly severs contact with Too Sweet.

Running the Books continues to struggle with these issues of repentance and reform. Does prison rehabilitate or reaffirm? Do these men and women deserve punishment or pity? Do they deserve a library?

Ultimately, two years as a prison librarian fails to provide Steinberg with any concrete answers. Instead he's left with a series of incongruous anecdotes and bizarre encounters with prisoners ranging from horrifying to heartwarming. On one off-duty Saturday night, Steinberg is met outside a late movie by a knife-wielding mugger. After snatching Steinberg's money, the mugger pauses: "I remember you, man. The book guy!"

The situation is at once terrifying and ironic, but this former (and, likely, future) convict can only laugh, adding insult to robbery: "Hey, I still owe you guys two books." He retreats into the night with \$43 "earned at the prison that had, until not long ago, held him captive," as Steinberg notes.

Running the Books refuses to elicit meaning from these situations, avoiding neat generalizations or sweeping clichés about the essential humanity of prisoners or the dehumanizing nature of prison. In the end, Steinberg finds that prison is full of people – inmates and guards – who don't want to be there, but don't seem to have anywhere else to go.

Running the Books: The Adventures of an Accidental Prison Librarian
By Avi Steinberg
399 pages. Nan A. Talese/Double-day. \$26.

Indian Cuisine in Midtown

continued from previous page

impressive. The "Chicken Tikki Masala," a bowl of grilled chunks of chicken simmered in a delicious orange-colored sauce with tomatoes and onions, is truly memorable—tender, heavily spiced, and just perfect to dump on the fresh basmati rice that comes on the side. The "Beef Korma," a dish whose mild, cashew-paste based flavor might be more appropriate for the uninitiated of the world of Indian cuisine, was strikingly similar to a well-spiced cholent, and served as another pleasant basmati drowner. The "Bread Basket," which offers diners three different types of traditional Indian

flatbreads ("Naan", onion-studded "Kulcha" and "Paratha") that are prepared much like Bedouin pita directly on the surface of a rounded oven, was a tasty accompaniment to the mains (The crass American that I am, I found myself making crumbling, mess-making mini-sandwiches stuffed with the Chicken Tikki Masala atop a bed of rice. Mmm).

Lets get down to business—I know the predominant religious proclivities of my college community well enough to know you were all thinking about...the prices. They aren't bad. Not a steal—appetizers average in the \$8 range, the bread

basket, delicious as it was, will set you back a full Hamilton, and chicken Mains all run for \$17.95 with beef and lamb Mains adding around \$3 and \$7, respectively, to that poultry price tag. In other words, it's a real meal out—you aren't going to be running here for the aforementioned fix of Paragraph 1. Expect to drop above \$50 for a *proper* meal for two (and yes, this is a nice date destination). HOWEVER, and I know your ears are now perked, since I would mention that all YU students, with their student ID, secure a generous 15% discount on dinner. Dinner, I say, because

Shalom Bombay also offers a nicely priced (\$12.95) lunch buffet (Sun-Fri 12-3pm), which boasts Tandoori chicken, another type of chicken, two hot vegetable dishes, fresh salads, did I mention BUFFET, lentils, basmati rice, Naan, various chutneys, AND dessert. I think I might know when you'll be going...

Shalom Bombay offers catering services as well (and even catered Rabbi Shmuley Boteach's daughter's *Bat Mitzvah* last year). Maybe if YU clubs, during their lunch events, offered Beef Pankoras and Mixed Kabab Platters instead of Lake Como pizza...

Part of the point of coming to a restaurant of this foreign sort is to experience flavors that are difficult to find on our side of the ocean, so I strongly recommend leaving the auspices of your culinary comfort zone and trying something new. *Shalom Bombay* offers a wonderful array of delicious, aromatic, and tantalizing Punjabi dishes for our unaccustomed American palates, and is certainly worth a visit. I know I'll be returning soon.

Nathaniel Jaret is the Arts & Culture Editor for The Commentator.

The Scene

You Are Really Dumb, Fo' Real

By JINA DAVIDOVICH

When I was applying to college, my parents, escapees from the evil Communist Empire, informed me of the brilliant Capitalist scam that is the Liberal Arts Education. Like a leech for your adolescence, this horrible experience would rob you of four years of your life where you could otherwise be seeking the most powerful natural resource ever discovered: money. All the while, mentored and made malleable by anarchist, liberal professors who would sing hymns about how though he was misunderstood, Marx really did have a good point to the tune of "Age of Aquarius". I would likely come back tattooed and pierced (note: I have already done the latter, so I suppose they were not entirely incorrect), and voting for the likes of Obama, *rachmana litzlan*, may the All-Merciful One save us. Like a pick-pocket, this evil force of education would take more than forty grand square out of your pocket each year; forty grand that would have been better spent on a fully loaded BMW if only I would consider living at home and going to a state school. Despite the lures of automobiles and the comforts of my Southern California abode, I pleaded: "Papa don't preach, I'll be in debt if need. But I've made up my mind, I'm keeping my education." And that is how I ended up here, in a Liberal Arts university. Or, a school that claims to be a Liberal Arts university. But as I couch myself comfortably in this Capitalist venture, costing my parents arms and legs, I can't help but wonder: is anyone

else interested in the humanities aside from myself?

As a tutor in the Writing Center, I am often asked about the easiest way to get an A. Students come in wondering how they will ever reach enough content to hit that coveted five page mark, aspiring for quantity, not quality. They ask what is the easiest English class to take in order to get an A. Many beg for tests that ask you to memorize countless details, rather than question the importance of a scene in literature a work of art, or a dilemma in philosophy. Creative thinking has become nothing more than a chore. As I peruse the halls of buildings, my threshold has become particularly low for the comments such as: "No, don't take that professor, he/she is extremely hard, there is no way that you'll get an A." I sometimes wish that I had the guts to be the superhero that would protect the sanctity of education, pull on my cape, and scream: "No fools! You have to take them! You might actually learn something." Of course, I stand silently in the back of the elevator, pretending to be texting while I scroll through my contacts, bemoaning the depreciation of learning.

Perhaps it is my Russian upbringing that has led me, nay, forced me, to give the humanities the time of day. As a little girl of eleven, with a Backstreet Boys poster situated above my bed, my father came into my room on a lovely Sunday morning, pronounced me illiterate, and commanded me to read Anna Karenina and all of Chekov by the

end of the month. While I am not certain that women throwing themselves under trains is the most suitable reading for a tween, my typical, Russian, engineer parents paved the path for a love of the arts with weekly piano lessons and frequent museum visits. Perhaps they knew that once I got to Calculus my "math genes" could not save me from the red "X"s that would overtake my homework assignments. I eventually began find other lettersthan "X" to express myself, when I began



to veer towards poetry., I feel like those around me look at me with a shade of curiosity and bewilderment when I proclaim that I want to study English Literature and be a professor. Perhaps I should just start saying I am going into OT, PT, ST, or even KT to avoid the stares.

Please don't misunderstand me, I see immeasurable value in the sciences. I mean, my favorite guilty-pleasure television show is Grey's Anatomy, and I am fascinated by gestation and birth. However, my problem is not with those who have a passion for the sciences, but rather, with those who believe in

the sciences as their personal savior by eschewing any other disciplines like many men in the *beit midrash* eschew *tanach* - as something less significant, less challenging, and less fundamental to society. While complaining about the necessity to memorize details for an Art History course, I recently got into a conversation with a young woman about the necessity of the humanities. "Is knowing who painted a particular work of art in a particular year going to save someone's life?"

Slightly wired and fired up, I immediately stepped on my soapbox and began a rant about the necessity of something like Art History. While I will spare you the fate with which she was met, the bottom line was this: Yes, you will save people by cutting them open and fixing them. But is a pulse what makes a person a human? Animals also have organs that need tending, wounds that need attention, and ailments that need curing. What makes a man human is how he expresses himself, how he connects to others, and how he impacts society with his ideas and passions; this, my dear pre-Med friend, is what we study in the humanities.

Perhaps I should just drop my act and say "gezunterhait." One day I might have a kidney stone and I will be thrilled that you couldn't care less about the origins of the Renaissance movement. But what of those who don't care for the humanities, or the sciences, but only for the holy grail of the Yeshiva University student: the GPA. I am not a advocate of bad grades. I, too, will one day

have to face graduate school applications where I will be reduced to a number. Nonetheless, is it really beneficial for you to take Sephardic Lifecycles, when you are so Yekke that you will arrive to class ten minutes early? Is your only criteria for a class one that fits your schedule and will not lower your GPA with high expectations? And here we get back to my question: why pay over forty thousand dollars a year for a University experience that you are not taking advantage of?

When presenting the premise of this article at a Shabbat meal, I was informed that I was being judgmental. I could not expect everyone to be passionate about education. Not everyone attends Yeshiva University for the educational experience, but rather, for the comfortable Jewish environment that it provides. I stopped for a moment, considering whether I was simply being elitist and snobby, and then later concluded: I believe it is a crime not to expand your mind, your experiences, and your interests during a time where you are free of responsibilities. Following a chosen career path is fine, but not taking advantage of the other bits and pieces of information that speak to the human experience is merely a waste of hard earned money. Perhaps we should all consider the words of American industrialist and philanthropist, J. Irwin Miller: "The calling of the humanities is to make us truly human in the best sense of the word." So maybe you should take a class that sounds interesting, even if the A is not guaranteed. I promise, knowledge won't bite.

TALIA TALK

Dorm Gourmet: The Student, the Baker, and the Sandwich Maker

A proper liberal arts education goes far beyond our Hebrew 1106 classes. A bachelor of the arts says so much more than even the blank diploma that we receive upon commencement can express. Even at a place like Sy Syms, one ideally hopes to contribute to the campus community, learn about the culture of the surrounding areas, soak up the social life and indulge in the cultural arts. Unfortunately, the culinary experience at most universities is often less than an art form. College students are infamous for gorging themselves with caf fro yo, coffee, pizza and all sorts of the preservative-packed treats that top the food pyramid. Because this food is often not nearly as satisfactory as our mother's homemade meals that we grew up on, we turn to quantity not quality to satisfy our cravings. But who can blame a student with only overdue chemistry homework and a few Caf Dollars to their name? It seems that the only place one has to

turn is the Caf Store, the TJ Maxx of grocery shopping. Sure, you can find hidden treasures like chocolate-chip multigrain bars but, honestly, those reject-assortment black jelly-beans are just insulting. It seems that all there is left to do at meal times is whine.

In fact a great deal of our time in university is often spent complaining about the food in dorm life. The other half is spent stuffing out faces with stale Entenmann's doughnuts. Word to you Softee Assortment lovers: if you attempt to bite into a stale Entenmann's, please find another use for it, like a coaster, a bangle, or an inner tube for your action figures. Every single one of the company's goodies is incredibly preservative-laden, meaning that the Entenmann's apple pie will likely outlive Yeshiva's chapter of Alpha Epsilon Pi. In fact, their 110 calories from fat make the doughnuts a staple in the diet that leads to the infamous freshman fifteen. Just

because most of us have never officially been freshmen, doesn't mean that we are immune to this expansion. Many of us have far surpassed that during our year of physical and spiritual growth in the holy land. In fact, Cornell University researchers found that first-year-on-campus students gain an average of a half a pound per week. That's about 11 times more weight than the average 17- and 18-year-old will gain, and nearly 20 times more than the average weight gain among adults. This gain is largely attributed to lack of choice in diet, and students' being without the time and resources to prepare their own meals. And so we need to look to taking our dining experience into our own hands, or dorm rooms. We need to look around and become re-acquainted with our old friend whose semester-old burnt mozzarella residue has been growing penicillin and rust.

According to the sandwich maker experts who contributed its official

Wikipedia page, "*Sandwich toasters are notorious for being used relatively little, because of their specialized nature. A survey carried out in 2005 suggested that 45% of British adults owned but did not use sandwich toasters.*" Well this is America. We invented this great appliance and we will use it more and better than any foreign friends.

We know that there is so much more to a sandwich maker than grilling cheese. On *Glee*, Finn uses his panini maker to find god. During the episode "Grilled Cheesus," Cory Monteith's character sees the alleged son of god in his burnt sandwich. Perhaps we Jews will find a religious figure as well, or simply an alternative to the meat loaf in the caf. We Hebrews are known to be a pretty resourceful people; we have found many uses for matzo meal, the word "shalom," and rumor has it, the sinks in Morg. In the *Dorm Gourmet* columns, we will find more uses for dorm-room appliances

than we ever even wanted to know. That's right, The Scene is expanding to enhance and make snarky comments about all aspects of your lifestyle. In this issue my little sister, Chef Elaina Kaufman and I provide you with original, do it yourself dorm -friendly versions of your favorite recipes. Each recipe featured will be simple, affordable, and will not require much precise measuring or culinary skill. In this installment, we will explore the sandwich maker, the mini kitchen that does so much more than grilling cheese.*

*Btei'avon!** Many complain that YU housing does not provide an authentic college experience, prohibiting alcohol, co-ed interaction, and sandwich makers. But this is The Scene, the most scandalicious section in the most scandalous of the official YU papers. So go ahead, have some fun.

Sandwich Maker Tips

a. Always, Always spray generously with a non-stick spray before using.

b. Always preheat sandwich maker and never leave your never leave it plugged in after use

c. Each recipe and machine takes a different amount of time to cook. So please check your food constantly.

d. That's really it. It's a pretty simple machine.

Local Omelet

Dairy

This is a spicy way to start your day. It help you to carry out the local Dominical flavor from the lullaby beats that bump you to sleep: you year at night to your pre-seder breakfast.

- 2 eggs
- Half a red pepper, sliced thinly
- Spoonful of salsa
- Spoonful of cheddar cheese
- Salt and Pepper to taste

1. Mix salsa, Eggs, cheese and spices in a small bow, beat with a fork
2. Put peppers on sandwich maker let cook for about a minute.
3. Add egg mixture let cook for 3 min



Pizza Pocket

Dairy

Delivery pizza is an infamously cliché college late night waste of calories. Sure Grandma's sells pizza with pasta, onion rings, and if rodents were parve they're probably by on a slice as well. But you can stuff just about anything into a Pizza Picket. So why not cork your arteries without picking up the phone?

- 1 Tortilla
- 2 Spoonfuls of pizza sauce
- 1 Spoonful of shredded mozzarella cheese
- ½ Morning star sausage patty, crumbled
- 3 Fresh spinach leaves

- Evenly coat tortilla with pizza sauce.
- Sprinkle oregano and garlic powder
- Sprinkle cheese, sausage crumbles, spinach leaves on half
- Fold over and cook



Talia Taco

Meat

This recipe is totally worth investing in a meat sandwich maker for: Not only is it named for your favorite Commie column, but it's the perfect way to spice up those late night study sessions. Ay Carumba!

- About 1/3 Cup ground beef
- Spoonful of taco sauce
- Tortilla
- Chilli
- Cumin
- Garlic powder
- Salt and Peppet to Taste

- Spice meat to taste
- Plate meat on sandwich maker until fully cooked and sauté, stirring with a fork
- Remove meat from sandwich maker and place inside tortilla
- Add taco sauce and fold over
- Place back into sandwich maker, cook until tortilla is slightly browned
- Add salsa and guacamole if desired



Choco-Cinna-Fluffer-Nutter-Cruncher Pie Pocket

Dairy/Parve
Tortilla

- 1 Spoon of butter
- Small bowl of sugar)
- Two spoons of peanut butter
- Handful or crushed cornflakes
- Handful or chocolate chips
- Spoon or marshmallow fluff
- Sprinkle of Cinnamon

1. Butter both sides of tortilla
2. Dip each side in sugar bowl
3. Spread one half of tortilla with fluff

3. Mix remainder of ingredients in a small bowl
4. Spread peanut butter mixture on other half of tortilla
5. Fold and place in sandwich maker
6. Cook until tortilla begins to firm
7. One cooled garnish with chocolate chips (optional)

Inside Out Cupcake

Dairy/ Parve

This is the perfect birthday celebration recipe. The directions make one individual cupcake but the entire recipe can feed an entire floor wide birthday party or one truly hungry birthday boy or girl. This calls recipe for more precise measuring than the rest, because who are we to mess with a Dunkan Hines classic? This recipe can be made with any cake mix. Feel free to mix and match, red velvet and cream cheese, chocolate on chocolate, or vanilla with whipped cream and strawberries. The possibilities are deliciousness!

- 1 Box Duncan Heinz Moist Deluxe Cake Mix
- Cake Mix
- 1 1/4 Cups Water (You may substitute milk or soy milk for a denser cake)
- 1 Tbsp. Vegetable Oil
- 3 Large Eggs
- 1 Container of Vanilla Frosting
- Small bowl of Sprinkles

1. Mix cake mix, water, oil and eggs in a large bowl
2. Beat with a fork until clumps are broken
3. Scoop two spoonfuls of batter into each side of the sandwich maker
4. Cook until browned (stick fork in to make sure middle is fully cooked)
5. Remove cake from sandwich maker
6. When cake is cooled, frost one cake and place second cake on top sandwiching frosted side
7. Dip each exposed side of frosting in sprinkle bowl
8. Stick candle in top and grow older!



Hello Tali's

Dairy

This recipe is an adaptation from the cookbook Simply Southern, the cookbook that benefits the Margolin Hebrew Academy in Memphis Tennessee (My alma matter). This phenomenal cookbook features the old southern recipes of our community, and features the writing of yours truly. In the cookbook I call what is widely known as the Hello Dolly Bar Howdy Dolly's. Whatever you call them, they are delicious!

- Four Graham Crackers crushed into fine crumbs
- Two spoonfuls of melted butter
- Sprinkle of Coconut Flakes
- Handful of pecans
- Handful of Milk Chocolate Chips
- Drizzle of Sweetened Condensed Milk

- Mix graham cracker crumbs and butter in a small bowl
- Condense half of crumb mixture onto sandwich maker
- Sprinkle, Coconut, chocolate, pecans onto crumbs
- Top with drizzle of sweetened condensed milk
- Cover with rest of graham cracker mixture condensed
- Make sure Tali's are hardened before you remove from sandwich maker



Deli Un-rolled

Meat

What is the missing element in dorm life? Homemade Shabbat food. Now you and your friends can have a holy Shabbath in the dorms with every family's favorite Shabbat day appetizer. But please keep it in moderation and save this treat for your neshama yesaira. Or your stomach might grow a couple of deli rolls itself.

- 1/3 of a puff pastry sheet (Cut horizontally)
- 3 to five slices of deli of your choice (We recommend smoked turkey and corned beef)
- 1 spoonful of honey mustard
- Sprinkle of sesame seeds for garnish

- Cut puff pastry sheet into three even pieces evenly
- Coat 2 pieces with honey mustard
- Place deli on top of mustard pieces
- Stack one pieces plain one in the middle, making sure that mustard sides are sandwiched inside
- Garnish top with a sprinkle of sesame seeds
- Cook until slightly browned



Photography: Joanna Ross-Tash

Make a Difference



Are you a graduating senior with political or Jewish communal experience looking for that meaningful first job?

Apply for an Orthodox Union Institute for Public Affairs Legislative Fellowship.

The Legislative Fellowship is an intensive one year post college position for dedicated individuals to advocate in Washington, DC on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish community. He/she will monitor legislation, build coalitions, develop synagogue social action programming, coordinate special events, create educational and public relations materials, and mobilize the grassroots of American Orthodox Jewry. Fellows will work side by side with senior OU leadership, Jewish communal leaders, Congressional and Executive Branch staffers, and be mentored by OU Public policy professionals.

Applications are now available and are being accepted for the 2011-2012 program. A competitive stipend is offered.

Application Deadline: April 6, 2011

For more information and to apply online, please visit www.ou.org/public_affairs



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