



The Yeshiva University

# OBSERVER

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## Program for Jewish Genetic Health Started at Einstein

Tamara Freiden

The new Program for Jewish Genetic Health (PJGH), a program directed towards providing resources and care for Jewish genetic health concerns, has officially been launched at Yeshiva University. The ribbon-cutting ceremony took place on February 9<sup>th</sup> in the Michael F. Price Center for Genetic and Translational Medicine at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Despite the fact that the official initiation occurred only recently, the program was originally put into action several years ago by Dr. Susan Gross, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Women's Health and Pediatrics at Einstein as well as the Chairperson of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Jacobi Medical Center. At that time, the program was established in the Human Genetics Lab at Jacobi and was focused solely on testing Jewish individuals for genetic diseases they may be carrying.

"Over four thousand individuals were tested," says Dr. Nicole Schreiber-Agus, Scientific Director and Program Liason for PJGH, "Most of whom emanated from

subsidizing screening programs nationwide."

Proven a success, the collaboration between YU and Einstein was solidified this past spring, and the program is now well underway. The formalization also included an expansion of the program's goals. The foundation of the program is formed by a three-pronged directive; to provide accessible and affordable options for carrier testing for Jewish genetic diseases, to increase awareness and disseminate timely information regarding genetic health to lay and professional sectors of the Jewish community, and to establish a centralized resource and support center for Jewish genetic health and associated concerns from birth through old age.

"The Program's philosophy revolves around servicing the community and listening to its needs," says Dr. Schreiber-Agus, "with the ultimate goal of the protection of its health and the health of its future generations.

With this multifaceted approach, the program is based in several locations. While the genetic testing

remains at the Jacobi Medical Center Human Genetics Laboratory, as well as other laboratories, the other clinical aspects of the program are held in Montefiore Medical Center. And, to emphasize the program's relationship with the rest of YU, the community programming and outreach will take place at the Center for the Jewish Future (CJF).

The program draws financial support both from grants and from philanthropy—meaning that events, subsidized screens, laboratory technology, research initiatives, and staffing will partly be supported by fundraising initiatives. Besides for Drs. Gross and Schreiber-Agus, the new program features Dr. Susan Klugman as Director of Clinical Services, Dr. Howie Nadel as Director of Operations, and Esie Rose as the program's genetic counselor.

When asked whether the undergraduate schools, specifically Stern College, would be affected by the program in any way, Dr. Agus-Schreiber replied with enthusiasm, saying that "a byproduct

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## New Program to Support Students Seeking External Fellowships

Renee Kestenbaum

Next month, the new Program for External Fellowships (PEF) will host two workshops informing undergraduates about prestigious fellowships, grants, scholarships, and other awards. Both workshops will focus on the skills needed to earn a shot at these opportunities.

Dr. Norman Adler, University Professor of Psychology and Special Assistant for Curriculum Development and Research Initiatives, heads the program. Dr. John Fousek was brought on board this fall to assist Stern College women pursue fellowships, while Assistant Dean of Student Academic Affairs Dr. Brian Weiser holds a similar position at Yeshiva College.

One of the PEF's workshops will teach freshman and sophomores how to determine their long-term goals, isolate the external programs that will help meet their goals, and begin their first application steps. These steps may include pursuing other internships early in their college career, taking particular classes, or participating in certain activities. The second workshop, intended for upperclassmen, will focus on writing essays and personal statements for applications.

"Fellowships are competitive opportunities ... designed to foster intellectual, leadership, and professional development," reads the Yeshiva College's fellowship webpage. They award an external source of funding so that scholars can undertake intellectual pursuits for an extended time, anywhere between a few months and several years. Many fellowships are intended for graduate students, though some are offered to undergraduates.

Prestigious fellowships include the Carnegie Junior Fellowship, the Fulbright scholarship, the Rhodes scholarship, the Jonas E. Salk scholarship, and the Jacob K. Javits fellowship. Some fellow-

ships specify an academic discipline, and fellowships are available in a wide range of fields.

Yeshiva University students have previously received prestigious fellowships, most notably last spring when Jane Kitaevich and Ari Lamm became YU's first students awarded Carnegie Junior Fellowships and Fulbright scholarships, respectively.

Until now, however, no programmatic approach existed for enabling large numbers of students to apply to fellowships outside YU. In the past, instructors individually approached students who might be potential candidates. However, the creation of the PEF allows for a comprehensive approach that will hopefully enable more students to receive external fellowships.

Many universities and liberal arts colleges boast programs that inform students of fellowships. The PEF provides similar information to YU undergraduates and will foster students' potential as award candidates. Eventually, the program hopes to extend to YU's graduate students as well, though for now undergraduates are priority. PEF also seeks to further involve professors in the process.

The program launched with an information session on December 16<sup>th</sup> that drew 70 students from both campuses. Dr. Kim Evans, a Fulbright scholarship recipient and current Associate Professor of English at Stern College for Women (SCW), addressed the students regarding her application experience and her Fulbright fellowship experience.

Dr. Evans stressed the value of developing one's interests organically, allowing room for inadvertent or chance event, and of thinking about the fellowship application process as an excellent opportunity to narrate the course of one's education.

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## Mock Trial Team Runners Up for Nationwide

Rachel Golian

The weekend of February 11<sup>th</sup>, the YU Mock Trial Team competed at Yale and came in 5-3, surpassing their 2010 score of 3-5. Although the team was only started last year by captain Avi Fink (YC '12), Fink and his co-captain Rachel Golian (SCW '12) used their experience to full advantage and lead YU to 9<sup>th</sup> place, with honorable mention. Although only the first 8 teams will continue on to Nationwide competition, if any of the current contenders drop out, the YU team will have the opportunity to compete in the Nationwide competition.

The yearly Mock Trial competition at Yale attracts 28 schools from all over the East Coast, in-

cluding Brown, Princeton, Dartmouth, Stony Brook, and Roger Williams. Each team is given one

In this year's case, a two-year-old boy named Joey Davis had died after eating beads from a toy named Princess Beads. The mother of child was now suing Happyland Toy Company, maker of Princess Beads, for the death of her child, as she believes that the beads were coated in a poisonous chemical. However, in Happyland's defense, Joey Davis was an ill child and some medical experts blamed his death on his sickness.

This year's YU team was composed of Avi Fink (captain, YC '12), Buri Rosenberg (YC '11), Michi Hayman (YC '11), Daniel Al-

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The 2011 Mock Trial team.

Rachel Weiss

side in a fictional case created by the American Mock Trial Association. When teams compete, they run through the entire trial, with each team playing opposing sides.

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## OP-ED

## Focus on Campus Life

Rivkah Rogowski, Editor-in-Chief

As close to one thousand Orthodox Jewish girls living in Midtown Manhattan, it should not surprise us that our campus culture is unique, to say the least. What other university boasts a mass exodus to the city suburbs Thursday night, and where else is counter culture characterized by leggings and tank tops?

Of course, this uniqueness is also manifested in other ways- for example, our vibrant *beit midrash*, friendly atmosphere, and the fact that \$1500 Mac laptops can be comfortably left alone for several hours in the library with no fear of theft. However, it is hard to deny that Stern undergraduate life often seems more like one big, noisy camp than a modern, private university.

As such, students often struggle to express themselves amidst this Modern Orthodox melting pot. This month's *Observer*, with

its focus on campus life, tries to take a look at the heterogeneity of campus life and expressions in a variety of different ways.

Elana Goldberg and Aimee Rubenstein, in "Inalienable Rights to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Miniskirts" and "You Are What You Wear", do so through the prism of the recently re-invigorated dress code. For many of us, dress is not only a creative expression but also reflective of our personal and religious identity. Is mandating a dress code infringing on this identity, or is does it merely ask students to respect the values of Yeshiva community?

Karen Steinberger, in "Are You In?," takes a look at the oft-maligned practice of staying in at Stern for Shabbat. Are we able to create a community on weekends if most students are gone by Friday morning? In "Under Your Parents Roof," Renee Kestenbaum looks

at the flip side by exploring how commuting students participate in campus life.

Students at YU often assume a non-questioning support of modern Israel- in "Encounter", Sophie Felder poses a compelling argument for viewing Israel holistically by listening to its detractors. Lauren Burstein continues this theme in "Israel Apartheid Take 7" by discussing the negative perception of Israel on secular campuses, opinions that YU students are often shielded from.

For those who spent their first year of YU in Israel, staying a fourth year on campus can seem an unnecessary indulgence. Jennie Kraut, in "It's a bird, it's a plane, it's Super Seniors?" discusses the pros and cons of staying as a super senior. And a slew of news articles discuss exciting campus events, such as Recyclemania, Mock Trial, and YUNMUN.

## The Story of Purim: Autonomy vs. Community

Dean Schwartz

As we approach the joyous holiday of Purim, we are reminded of the story of salvation and victory over a nefarious enemy who set out to destroy the Jewish community in the Persian Empire. The outline of the story is well known, but there are some odd elements to this story at which I would like to take another (slightly whimsical and psychologically minded) look. My goal is to see whether there might be issues to explore that may be particularly resonant to college students, their concerns and struggles.

Whether openly acknowledged or not, every individual frequently faces various conflicts of values and ideals. These conflicts often center on what I, as an individual, might want and what authorities or the community might want or expect of me. The first chapter of *Megillat Esther* (the Book of Esther) is a long display of just such a conflict. A full chapter is taken up with the story of Queen Vashti's refusal to appear at the party thrown by her husband (she was making her own party and maybe did not want to be bothered). A long discussion at the end of the chapter records King Ahashverosh's consultation with his advisors and their concern that the Queen's rebellion will cause a breakdown in "traditional family values" in the kingdom. Queen Vashti, by following her personal inclination, will undermine the social structure of the society! Vashti is removed from her role and a new queen is sought - order is to be reestablished.

The next episode recorded in the *megilla* again deals with rebellion against authority. Bigtan and Teresh are angry and plot to kill the king. Yet Mordechai uncov-

ers the plot and all is stabilized again. Shortly later, another rebellion against authority occurs, but of a somewhat different nature. Haman has become viceroy (whatever that is) and all the courtiers are supposed to bow to him. Now Mordechai (faced seemingly with a different kind of clash of values) refuses to bow down to Haman. *Megillat Esther* 3:4 alludes to this clash: "...they tell Haman to see whether Mordechai's principles will stand." Haman is angered and decides that in this clash of principles, the Jews and their principles must go.

In a fascinating twist of irony, ultimately the Jews, through the activities of Queen Esther and Uncle Mordechai, prevail, partly because Ahashverosh remembers that Mordechai is not a rebel against the crown (and the social order) but in fact saved the king's life and thus the kingdom. But note what Ahashverosh ultimately tells Queen Esther. If I may paraphrase, he tells her that she can have *whatever she wants* up to 50 percent of the kingdom. He is not a man of principles; he wants what he wants, and Queen Esther can have what she wants as far as he is concerned.

As we know, the story turns out well for the Jewish community, and that is why we have a joyous holiday. But there is a strange coda to the *megilla* that I never understood until I thought about this clash of freedom and autonomy with authority.

The last chapter tells us that Mordechai, who has now himself become viceroy (still don't know what that is), is accepted by the vast majority of his brethren. It also mentions a tax that the king

has levied. If we follow my theme around autonomy and rebellion, it would seem the king has reestablished his authority (what proves authority more than the ability to levy a tax?). Mordechai, rather than being a bit of a rebel, is now on the "inside" and thus, while his brethren are pleased that they have one of their own in the administration, maybe there is a tiny bit of ambivalence among his religious community. Has he sold out? If there is a conflict of cultures or values, will he back the authorities or his own community?

Young people setting out to establish their own lives are faced with deciding how much freedom and autonomy is okay, and how much one remains true to the values of family, community and nation. Freedom and responsibility are particularly complicated issues for those of us who live and learn within a religious community or university. How far the boundaries of freedom of what I may want, as opposed to the demands or expectations of religion and community, can stretch is often unclear.

The dynamism of this can be challenging at times. Our work is to decide how to discuss and test these issues as a family and community, with mutual care, respect and concern for balance.

I want to thank *The Observer* for giving me the opportunity to share my free associations, and I also want to apologize for any undue liberties taken (or damage done) with the text of the *megilla*. From the Office of Student Affairs and personally, I would like to wish everyone a joyous (but also safe and responsible) Purim.

The Yeshiva University

## OBSERVER

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## NEWS

## YUNMUN Competition Hosts 450 Students

Adina Erdfarb

The 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Yeshiva University National Model United Nations took place February 6-8, 2011, at the Sheraton Stamford Hotel in Stamford, Connecticut. Sponsored by the Yeshiva University Office of Admissions, YUNMUN XXI hosted over 450 students from 48 high schools throughout North America and, for the first time, United Kingdom, South Africa, and Brazil.

"The purpose of YUNMUN is to allow students to debate and learn about points of view and ideas they would never otherwise study or learn about," says Steven Paletz (YC '11), this year's Secretary General. YUNMUN affords high school students the opportunity to take part in current international issues, engage in passionate, of-the-moment debate, and work toward resolutions, as is done in the real United Nations. Students were assigned to one of fifteen committees in advance of the conference, tasked with researching and preparing topics of global significance. Over the course of the three-day convention, delegates debated these subjects from the viewpoint of their pre-assigned countries, which often differed from their personal views.

This year's conference was overseen by Paletz and Under Secretaries Benjamin Abramowitz (YC '12), Jina Davidovich (SCW '12) and Tirtza Spiegel (SCW '11). The conference was jointly coordinated with the Office of Admissions, led by Moshe Zharnest (YC '10), YUNMUN Coordinator and Heidi Fuchs, Operations Manager of Undergraduate Admissions. YUNMUN was also staffed by more than 60 YU undergraduates, who served as committee chairs, assistant chairs and administrative assistants, as well as resource room, newspaper, and general staff.

Scheduled to begin on Super Bowl Sunday, YUNMUN kicked off with a Super Bowl party on Sunday night, with screens throughout the hotel broadcasting the Green Bay Packers' victory over the Pittsburgh Steelers. Opening ceremonies were held soon after, and the first committee session took place late Sunday night. Five additional committee sessions were held on Monday, with students hotly debating pressing global issues.

After hours of intense diplomacy and deliberation on Monday, closing ceremonies were held on Tuesday morning, during which each committee chair presented a best delegate award and two honorable mentions to deserving students on each committee. Paletz then presented best delegation awards to the top schools of the conference. This year's winners were Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy of Rockville Maryland; Tanenbaum CHAT

of Toronto, Ontario; and Maimonides School of Brookline, Massachusetts, which placed first, second, and third, respectively.

A notable addition to this year's YUNMUN was the presence of students from United Kingdom, South Africa, and Brazil, who represented the Red Cross in various committees. These international students, who were able to attend with the help of the Center for the Jewish Future, enhanced the international tone of this year's Model UN.

"The conference was a unique experience for a student from the UK since there is nothing like this here," says Marina Spiers, a senior at Jewish Free School (JFS) in Kenton, North London. "It was a fantastic opportunity to participate in the committee meetings, learning about a variety of issues and seeing many viewpoints as well as giving participants a chance to hone their communication skills. It was also great to meet so many people from all different places, and all the English kids had an amazing time. We were honored to have been invited to this event."

Despite the Office of Admissions' obvious involvement, YUNMUN is not a blatant recruiting opportunity. "The event is run by the Office of Admissions in an effort for students to become involved in an academic event put on by the university," says Paletz. "We are careful not to outwardly recruit but rather ask our staff to lead by example. Students will see what an amazing and exciting place Yeshiva University can be, instead of just being told that it is great. They see undergraduate students that are leaders and learn from as well as follow their examples."

Adds Zharnest, "Model UN is the largest and only gathering of Jewish day schools in the world. It gives us a chance to show 48 schools and five countries why Yeshiva University is the place to be."

Overall, high school students, chaperones, and undergraduates alike had an enjoyable, educational, and memorable experience at this year's Model UN. "This year was one of the most successful conferences yet," noted Paletz. "The chairs believe this was one of the most competitive years yet." Plans are already underway for YUNMUN XXII, at which Davidovich plans to serve as Secretary General with Abramowitz again functioning as one of the conference's under secretaries.

Estie Neff

At Stern College for Women (SCW), some things will never happen. Elevators won't empty at lunchtime, local shuttles won't come on time, and there will never be sesame chicken in the caf store after 8:05 p.m.

But if students thought trees would never fall into dorm rooms, they have just been proven wrong.

At 1:00 a.m. on January 26<sup>th</sup>, a tree fell into room 519A in the 36<sup>th</sup> Street Residence Hall, where Shalvi Berger and Alyssa Offman, seniors at SCW, were sleeping peacefully.

"We were both sleeping when we heard a minor cracking/explosion noise," recalled Berger in an interview. Offman thought the noise was simply icicles falling onto the windowsill situated between their beds. At first they ignored it, but the second time they heard the noise they pulled up the window shade and saw branches pressed up against the glass.

Thinking the branches were just weighed down by ice and snow, Berger and Offman were initially unconcerned until they investigated further and saw "spidery cracking in the glass" which was "making small explosion noises," said Berger. Berger still wanted to go back to sleep, but Offman was a bit more apprehensive.

"She was like, 'It's gonna explode!'" said Berger. So the roommates quickly dressed and darted out of their room. Once outside, they heard "a huge explosion," according to Berger's description. They looked back through the door to see a tree that had crashed down in the exact location where they stood mere seconds earlier.

## Tree Crashes into Student Dorm

The tree fell through a window and knocked over the two dressers between their beds. Offman immediately went to get security and Berger went back to stay by their room. Thankfully neither students nor any of their possessions were damaged, but the incident still caused quite a stir among their peers.

"By the time I came back up the stairs to my room, there was a crowd outside my room," remembered Berger. The students had heard the big explosion and came running to see what was going on, and many offered her their beds to sleep in.

Meanwhile, down at the security desk, Offman was having some trouble getting a response from the guards. "They were not listening to anything she was saying," said Berger. Eventually a female security guard came up to assess the situation, and was so fascinated with the fallen tree that she took pictures of it on her phone. The floor GA realized it was dangerous to be in the room, so she got everyone out - security guard and all.

Berger and Offman spent the night in the room next door. The next day they met with Rachel Kraut, director of university housing and residence life, and had all of their belongings moved into two single rooms, where they currently live.

Kraut stated that by Thursday, February 17, she expects the window in 519A to be replaced and the room cleaned, ready for Berger and Offman to reoccupy it. Kraut has maintained constant contact

with Berger and Offman, saying that she had emailed them weekly with updates.

"This is my eleventh year [at Yeshiva University (YU)], and something like this hasn't happened in the eleven years I've been here," Kraut mused.

Joe Shatoff, associate director of administrative services, is very involved in removing the tree and replacing the window. He said that the tree was in fact not from YU's property, but fell from a neighboring property that belongs to Guibert & Company. Shatoff expects Guibert to cover cost of the damages and is currently in contact with them.

"They've been very cordial and professional and not combative at all," noted Shatoff. "We have a good relationship with them and don't anticipate any problems."

Berger said she was disappointed with the way school officials handled the fallen tree, concluding that "it could have been more organized, and they should have reached out to the students more." However, she finds it somewhat humorous as well, adding that now the security guards at 36<sup>th</sup> Street call her and Offman "the tree girls."

Offman had similar mixed emotions, moving between amusement and annoyance. "My first reaction was, I have a great story for speech class tomorrow...but then I realized my room got destroyed," Offman communicated in an email. "I am excited to go down in Stern history, so that way my name shows up on Google."

## Mock Trial Team Runners Up for Nationwide

MOCK TRIAL from page 1

taras (YC '12), Ethan Wasserman (YC '12), Rachel Golian (Captain, SCW '12), Dina Wecker (SCW '12), Talya Laufer (SCW '13), Rachel Weiss (SCW '11), and Sari Ladaew (SCW '13). For weeks before the actual Mock Trial competition, the team members traveled to practice sessions at Cordozo, studying the fictional case, perfecting their speeches, and working on direct and cross examination techniques.

As the February competition date approached, practices increased to two to three times per week. By the last week, the team even began meeting every night in order to perfect their routines.

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the first day of the tournament, the team set-

tled into the New Haven Hotel for the weekend. The building was a mere ten-minute walk from the Yale University building where the matches were held. Yale was extremely accommodating in terms of Shabbat. Instead of two trials on Saturday and two on Sunday, Yale allowed the YU team to play one game on Friday, one on Saturday night, and the last two on Sunday. YU competed against Yale, Stony Brook, Southern Connecticut, and Roger Williams.

At the awards ceremony, the YU team was thrilled to find that they had placed 9<sup>th</sup> with honorable mention. Although only the top 8 schools continue to the next round, there is still hope for YU. Golian explains that "If any team

drops out- which is actually very likely- then the school that had any honorable mention with the most points is given the spot. As of now, YU is on the top of the list, over 20 other schools." Golian herself won an All Region Attorney Award for her noteworthy performance, an award that she also took last year.

Surprisingly, most of the people on the team are not considering law as a career. Fink is actually pre-med, and Golian is pursuing psychology. "Nevertheless," Fink adds, "It is still extremely rewarding." Rachel Weiss, "expert witness," adds that "I loved my experience with Mock Trial. It was like acting, yet in a totally different setting."

# Beren Unite!



## NEWS

## Tiberias Offers VIP Card to Yeshiva Students

Basyah Klyman

Beginning Monday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, Tiberias will be offering a discount card to Yeshiva University students. This offer provides a free salad, beverage or Panini after the purchase of five of one item.

Located at 45 E 34<sup>th</sup> St, across the street from Brookdale Residence Hall, Tiberias is a local hangout for the Stern crowd. Students can be seen popping in for a capuccino, sitting for dinner, or cozying up to a late night date. Open 24 hours, Tiberias boasts an extensive sushi bar in addition to pastas, fish, paninins, soups and appetizers.

According to manager, Eli Stern, "The idea of a discount for Stern students came up a long time ago and it took us a few weeks to figure out the right way to do it. This is only the beginning of a period of many discounts and specials for Yeshiva students. I think the students will be really happy with the VIP Card and the deals coming up."

The VIP discount mentioned allows the cardholder a buy-five-get-one-free deal on salads, paninis and beverages. After purchasing five of the aforementioned items, the cardholder receives the sixth free. Once a student has picked up her card, she can activate it by joining the Facebook group "Tiberias Kosher". Each card is specific to its owner and cannot be used by anyone other than its original recipient.

"It's my go-to spot at any point during the day and night," says GA Molly Sharffman. "Mozarella sticks are my guilty pleasure." Even non-Stern flock to Tiberias for a personalized salad. Danielle Bartah, a student at Rutgers University, was recently spotted putting together her favorite combination of vegetables. Both said they are looking forward to the Tiberias VIP Card, joining the Facebook group, and are keeping their eyes open for upcoming deals.

## John Sexton to Speak at Graduation

Observer Staff

At this year's graduation, Yeshiva University's Class of 2011, as well as their assorted family and friends, will be addressed by John Sexton. Sexton is the President of New York University (NYU), a position that he has held since 2002.

Sexton was previously dean of NYU's law school before being appointed as the university's president. He holds a doctorate in the history of American religion from Fordham and a law degree from Harvard. His appointment as graduation speaker marks a change from last year's speaker, Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren.

The graduation will take place on May 27<sup>th</sup> in the Izod Center in New Jersey. Although in previous years it has been held in Madison Square Garden, due the unavailability of that venue, it was shifted to the New Jersey location.

## Torah Le'Tzion Shiur Brings in Crowd and Funds

Estie Neff

On Wednesday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, at Stern College for Women (SCW), hundreds of students participated in raising \$2,000 for Torah Letzion (TLZ) through a *shiur* given by Rabbi Hershel Schachter, Rosh Yeshiva of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS).

Rabbi Schachter appeared in conjunction with Torah Letzion (TLZ), an organization that raises money to send Jewish men and women for a year of study in Israel. Marc Merrill, co-director of TLZ and a *semicha* student at RIETS, manned a table outside the *shiur* selling raffle tickets for TLZ's annual fundraiser. His efforts were not disappointed; TLZ collected \$2,000 from just that night's event.

"I'm really grateful to all the Stern girls for coming to the *shiur*, and making this event such a hit," Merrill remarked. "It was really an amazing feeling to fill up an entire room for a TLZ event."

The room where the *shiur* took place was packed as students dragged in chairs and tried to find a spot to sit. Rabbi Schachter, who spoke at SCW last semester about *aliyah*, is clearly a popular speaker on campus, known for his broad and in-depth knowledge of *halachic* and *hashkafic* topics. In his *shiur*, titled "Bringing the Beis Hamikdash into the Living Room: *Mikdash Miat*," he defined the status of the Beis Hamikdash's sanctity in modern times and explained how it manifests itself practically in everyday life.

"I thought it was great," commented Aliza Pelzner, senior at SCW, in an interview. "He spoke about a lot of things that were very applicable to life on a broad spectrum. I think a lot of people really loved it and really got a lot out of it."

Daniel Sherman, co-director of TLZ and a student at Yeshiva College (YC), opened the night with several moving remarks about the mission and accomplishments of his organization.

"Having so many attentive people in the crowd was really amazing for Torah Letzion," said Sherman. "It really meant a lot to be able to let everyone know all about the organization. Many people in the room had heard about TLZ, but now they know what we do, and how important TLZ is."

Sherman told one particularly poignant story about a young woman who was determined to attend a seminary in Israel even though she could not afford it. She offered to wash the school's dishes in return for the finances she lacked. Thankfully, TLZ was able to raise enough money to grant her a scholarship so she could attend seminary without having to wash their dishes.

"It's amazing that such young students are able to make such a difference," added Pelzner. "From the stories [Sherman] told, he really shows the impact that they're making. I think it's something that people should get involved in."

A few years ago, Merrill and Sherman were two undergraduate students who started a fledgling organization. Since then, they have seen tremendous growth. Their team has grown to include a number of volunteers, including a number of SCW students who represent TLZ on the Beren campus.

To find out more about the organization, visit their website ([www.torahletzion.org](http://www.torahletzion.org)) and read *The Observer's* interview with Torah Letzion in the November 2010 issue.

## Recyclemania 2011 Begins

Sophie Felder

This year's Recyclemania contest officially began on February 6<sup>th</sup>, as students across the Beren campus began hoarding their recyclables in order to participate in the international competition.

Recyclemania is an inter-university competition meant to stir students to recycle while raising awareness about environmental concerns. It was started in 2001 by Ed Newman of Ohio State and Stacy Edmonds Wheeler of Miami University in order to encourage recycling in their respective school's dining halls. The two schools battled each other, with Miami taking the win over Ohio State.

Since then, Recyclemania has expanded to over six hundred campuses across the US and Canada. The competition has also developed eight contest categories, including one targeted for paper and plastic. There is also an overall Grand Champion category. Last year, YU got a spot as the 35<sup>th</sup> school to place in the bottles and cans division.

This is the fourth year that YU has participated as a university in the competition. In 2008, with the formation of the Office of Sustainability, all environmental activities across the various YU campuses were integrated. Initiatives to recycle on the Einstein campus were combined with efforts on Beren and Wilf to launch YU onto the Recyclemania radar.

This is just one of the projects that the Office of Sustainability has taken charge of. They have been the driving force behind making

sure that the university reaches its goal of zero emissions in 2050.

It is a surprisingly popular event, though more so on the Beren campus than on the Wilf. When it comes to recycling, it seems that the women of Stern College are far more motivated than their male counterparts. Still, Rose Snyder, a junior at Stern College who has been volunteering to collect recyclables for Recyclemania, comments that "I'm surprised by the lack of recycling that goes on at Stern."

At Stern, Recyclemania has also become an inter-floor competition. It is a brutal 8 weeks of frantic bottle hunting, with many tricks played, all for the sake of a free pizza party. Talya Seidman, a junior at Stern College, says that "we're all really into Recyclemania-my roommate has been hoarding all her bottles for Recyclemania for months. Her enthusiasm makes me want to do more to help the environment."

Last year, the floor that walked away with the prize was the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of Brookdale. However, despite the Office of Sustainability's tasty enticement, the students at Wilf have not been sold on the competition.

Weighing stations have been set up throughout the buildings so that volunteers can collect and weigh the recycling from their floors that will then contribute to the university's total recycling. The competition is judged based on which school has the highest weight of recycling.

The YU Eco Reps, students who participate in an educational initiative through the Office of Sustainability, will be weighing the recycling from the Sy Syms School of Business as well as Stanton Hall. Sanitation workers have also taken the initiative in assisting the Eco Reps and the entire university in its recycling endeavors.

In order to facilitate the competition, students are advised to look into what is recyclable and what is not. They might be surprised to find that juice boxes are in fact recyclable, while yogurt containers and plastic salad containers from the cafeterias are not. However, unexpectedly, even milk and orange juice containers that are waxed can be recycled. The better sorted the recycling is, the more likely it is that it will actually be recycled and not just returned to the general garbage can.

In a recent statement during the Senior Class Shabbaton, President Richard Joel expressed the university's interest in furthering its environmental initiatives and that student support is of utmost importance when trying to implement new practices. This competition hopes to educate students about the importance of recycling, as well as the ease with which it can be achieved.

If students have any questions about the competition, they should feel free to check out the website of the Office of Sustainability and contact the staff there, including their YU Eco Reps.

## New Program to Support Students Seeking External Fellowships

FELLOWSHIPS from page 1

Her living expenses covered by the Fulbright scholarship, Dr. Evans spent a year researching Herman Melville and suggesting that he ought to be considered a Pacific (and not only New England) writer. It was a "privilege to have time to follow my own mind," she said, to fully pursue her intellectual interests, to follow interesting leads, on no one's agenda but her own. "It feels good to not be doing something because you have to, but because you want to," she said. "It's the kind of thing we want for YU students, for Stern students."

"Since YU is an Orthodox insti-

tution, programs like the one last semester are very important," said Helen Unger, SCW '13, who attended the information session. After learning of different options, she feels "more ready to apply for a fellowship. I think I will do it."

Faygel Beren, SCW '12, who also attended the session, said "people should realize that they have the option not to just go to graduate school," said Faygel Beren, SCW '12. "They can go to graduate school in the context of a greater mission - echoing the words of Dr. Evans, in the creation of a personal narrative."



NEWS

**Shoel U'Meishiv  
Instituted in the SCW  
Beit Midrash**

Rachel Schultz

Rabbi Michael Kaplan has recently joined Stern College for Women as the new *Shoel U'Meishiv*. His hiring is part of a continual effort to enhance and elevate the learning environment in SCW, as well as to encourage a greater number of students to take advantage of the Beit Midrash.

The institution of the *Shoel U'Meishiv* position was initiated by SCW Junior Leora Niderberg. As a Torah Activities Committee (TAC) board member, Niderberg serves as the liaison for the Beit Midrash Committee (BMC) and as the intermediary between various club heads and the administration. She approached Rabbi Kanarfogel on behalf of TAC and the BMC, expressing the need for a permanent fixture in the Beit Midrash to provide assistance and guidance to students.

Rabbi Kanarfogel was immediately receptive to the idea and began to take the necessary steps to fill this unique role. He developed a list of potential candidates and contacted Rabbi Marc Penner, Director of Professional Rabbinic Education at RIETs, who facilitated the process as well.

Rabbi Kaplan is an extremely accomplished individual who is well-qualified for his new position. Having attended Yeshiva College and receiving his semicha from RIETs, Rabbi Kaplan currently serves as a Rabbinic Associate at the Riverdale Jewish Center. He founded the Organization for the Resolution of Agunot, known as ORA, and served as its director for five years. Additionally, he has a Master's Degree from the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies.

As he was finishing up Revel, Rabbi Kaplan received the email about the position from Rabbi Penner. He immediately expressed interest in becoming the *shoel u'meishiv* at Stern, having previously served as a *shoel u'meishiv* for the Beit Midrash Program (BMP) in Yeshiva University. The presence of a *shoel u'meishiv* will help to advance the level of learning within the Beit Midrash by providing students with a knowledgeable and experienced Rabbi to whom they can turn to for clarity and increased understanding.

Both TAC and BMC members felt strongly that hiring a *shoel u'meishiv* in order to facilitate a comfortable atmosphere would hopefully attract more students to spend their time learning. Students are encouraged to utilize the tremendous resources the Beit Midrash has to offer and should feel comfortable approaching Rabbi Kaplan. He is available Monday

through Wednesday nights from 7:30-9:30 PM to assist students, answering questions, translating words, and aiding in any and all aspects of the learning process.

Excited and thrilled to play a role within the greater movement to advance women's Torah learning in SCW, Rabbi Kaplan, in his own words, believes that his purpose is "to serve as a resource for the students -- whether it is to help with a sugya in gemara, preparation of a Tanakh assignment, or the translation of a particular word." Additionally, he expressed interest in giving a weekly shiur or schmooze, if the desire from the student body exists.

Niderberg believes that a *Shoel U'Mayshiv* is a necessary component of any legitimate Beit Midrash. "The point is that every well-stocked Beit Midrash is not just stocked in *Sefarim* - but in people who can help in using those *Sefarim* as well," she said. "If we take ourselves seriously as an institution interested in taking women's learning to the next level, we must be providing the resources to reach that next level." Expressing his enthusiasm regarding the new *Shoel U'Mayshiv*, Rabbi Kanarfogel said, "Overall,

**WHAT'S THE HOCK?!**

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
23 January	24	25 First Day of Classes	26	27	28
30	31	1 February <i>Branstoning Party</i>	2	3	4
6	7	8 February Writer Deadline	9 <i>Women's Training Event</i>	10	11
13	14	15	16	17	18
20	21	22 Purim Article Deadline	23	24	25
27	28	1 March	2	3 <i>Midterms</i>	4 <i>Midterms</i>
6 <i>Midterms</i>	7 <i>Midterms</i>	8 <i>Midterms</i>	9 <i>Midterms</i>	10 <i>Midterms</i>	11
13	14 <i>Midterms</i>	15 <i>Midterms</i>	16 <i>Midterms</i>	17 <i>Taanit Esther</i>	18
20 Purim	21	22	23	24	25
27	28	29	30 April Writer Deadline	31	1 April
3	4	5	6	7	8
10	11	12	13	14	15 Pesach
17 Pesach	18 Pesach	19 Pesach	20 Pesach	21 Pesach	22 Pesach
24 Pesach	25 Pesach	26 Pesach	27 Pesach	28	29
1 May	2	3	4 May Writer Deadline	5	6
8	9	10 Yom Ha'Atzmaut	11 Reading Day	12 Reading Day	13 Reading Day
15 Reading Day	16 Reading Day	17 Reading Day	18 Finals	19 Finals	20 Finals
22 Finals	23 Finals	24 Finals	25 Finals	26 Graduation	

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**PJGH Started at Einstein**

EINSTEIN from page 1

of the Program is getting young people involved in communal life in general, and passionate about the mission in specific." There will be emphasis on training individuals for a future in the field.

While the program was still being formalized, it afforded Yeshiva College and Stern students with internships, and such individuals will continue to play a critical role as it progresses. Additionally, a new presidential fellowship position has been created at PJGH. Members of the program will also come and speak to Stern students about Jewish genetic health, career choices, and other pertinent topics.

The program hopes to encompass not only autosomal recessive diseases like Tay-Sachs, but also

to reach beyond and anticipate what will affect future generations genetically. This can include anything from familiar cancers and adult-onset neurodegenerative diseases to bone marrow transplants and new gene therapies. "By combining the power of YU and Einstein and partnering with many outstanding organizations already so hard [at work] on this throughout our country and beyond," says Dr. Scheiber-Agus, "we are well positioned to triumph over issues like these."



## FEATURES

**Focus on Campus Life****Religious Diversity on Campus: Fact or Fiction?**

Suzanne Mazel

Imagine a flock of sheep. Pretty standard looking, right? No real way to tell one apart from another? However, while most people cannot tell the sheep apart, the sheep can!

Now think of Stern College for Women (SCW). While the students are not a flock of sheep, to people unfamiliar with the university they may appear similar. However, the students themselves know that everyone is unique, especially in matters of religion.

Miriam Gofine, (SCW '11), demonstrates the principle that "sheep can tell the difference". Gofine says that she "really realized the diversity of religious life and participation on campus after spending time on campus, talking to people."

Though the university operates under strictly Modern Orthodox principles, the student body encompasses a wide spectrum of belief. Dean Zeldia Braun, Associate Dean of Students at SCW, recognizes these differences.

"We have a diverse population, we're not homogenous, and part of the beauty of who we are is we welcome all types of people," said Dean Braun.

Beth Hendler (SCW '11) says there is "definitely" diversity on campus. "There's religious diversity everywhere you go, no matter where you are."

However, one student, Ayala Raice (SCW '12), holds a differing opinion, believing that the administration and the student body have the same religious beliefs.

"It's nonsense to say there's religious diversity on this campus," says Raice. "We're all in the Modern Orthodox community. There's nothing that gives the sense that there's an inherently diverse community."

One anonymous student holds a third opinion, believing that there "is religious diversity but it's not supported by the administration."

"By stopping events from happening, they're pretty much telling the students that it's not okay to question this matter, [the matter being] whatever the topic of the stopped event was", she says. "We're Jews, the fabric of our identity is we're people that question, we're people that investigate."

Talia Kaufman (SCW '12) strikes

a balance between the administration's known stance and the students' supposed differences.

"Of course there's going to be some sort of authority and there needs to be some sort of control but it's up to [students] to find [their] place in that... it's an organizational medium and hopefully it'll help the students," Kaufman said.

Gofine agrees, saying, "at the end of the day [the school] has a certain doctrine it follows and [the student] chose to attend Yeshiva University...at a certain point it's up to the individual to explore for herself and pursue her own avenues".

Dean Braun emphasizes this point. "To those women who are struggling with their connection to who they are as Jewish women, we need to offer an environment that is welcoming and supportive for them to explore their concerns. To that end, that is why we have personnel available on campus, available to all students, i.e., the *mashgichim*, *madrichot ruchanot* (spiritual counselors), as well as the rest of the student affairs staff."

Rebecca (Devorah) Balarsky (SCW '11) represents one sect of religious Judaism people often make snide comments about Chabad. "A lot of people are ignorant about Chabad," says Balarsky, but she is "happy I get to represent Chabad and give them a true experience of what Chabad is".

Women at Stern "get to see various types of religious sects and ideas and philosophy which is definitely a positive...since we should be open to other ideas and ways of" observing Judaism.

Balarsky describes it as a "struggle" to sit through classes and teachers "who thought negatively toward my views on Torah" but notes "the administration is more open than some of the faculty".

Within the university housing department, "there are definitely religious issues that are encountered every year within dorming," remarks one anonymous Resident Advisor.

"I think diversity on our campus is a very beautiful thing but it creates a lot of tensions. Many students come here because it's a

religious institution [but they feel students whose religious practices differ from theirs] are acting in the wrong way because of their expectations in coming to Yeshiva University," she said. The skirmishes that occur in housing "can be isolated events but they still happen all the time".

One student, who wishes to remain anonymous, feels that Stern has helped to shape and develop her religious identity.

"I've become more comfortable with religion, being Jewish... [I] sort of have an understanding of what it is to be Jewish," she said.

From her time here at Stern College, she has concluded "Judaism is a guidance [sic] to how to be a better person, how to lead a better life, how to treat people better."

Overall, this student's experiences have been enjoyable, if not one hundred per cent perfect. She knows there are religious differences between people, and sometimes feels judged by different people.

"They just look at me wearing pants and they assume I'm a certain type of person, which is for some reason worse than them... [they are] a little more close minded than they should be, being in the middle of the city...surrounded by people from all over the world."

But she does not let it affect her. "Growing up, I was always told public opinion doesn't really matter as long as you're a good person and stay true to yourself."

With a final push, she says "it doesn't matter to [me] to prove them wrong".

Ilana Hostyk (SCW '11) describes herself as a student on a "Jewish Journey," a process which changes a student's "perspective on the metaphysical, which then

leads to the courage to confront religion on one's own terms and not just follow culture."

She is "of firm belief that organized religion, as practiced today, is no more than a set culture and set society. Every culture is different, with its own truth, own norms, and we happen to be within one culture."

Hostyk feels much of the student body is sympathetic or empathetic to her quest.

"Many of us are in the same boat," Hostyk said. "Many students are coming from a similar place and are going through the same upheaval". However, Hostyk is "slightly outside the norm solely because I am confident in it. I'm really open which then leads to meeting people" in similar situations.

Despite Hostyk's accepting attitude and her ability to "respect everyone's decisions in life", she finds "that's not a two way street when the other side doesn't recognize the other side is valid".

That realization came abruptly. Hostyk found that out "the second I started to wear pants. I thought the people I want to associate with would be above that- many were, yet the vast majority certainly wasn't."

Though organized religion may not play as great a role in her life as it once did, "morality and living

an ethical life is just as important to me now as it was before... Judaism as a culture, ethnicity, is still a really strong part of my life...from the food I eat, the men I fall in love with, the jokes I tell, all of that I don't want to separate from."

Her experiences at SCW lead her to believe "there isn't as much religious diversity as religious angst." Student are "confronted with material in college that challenges their religious assumptions," says Hostyk, but "there's no course that deals with it...there's very little leadership or guidance about a religious quest."

However, the faculty whom Hostyk has broached with her questions supported her.

"The professors gave me books, told me to keep reading, to keep on questioning," said Hostyk.

For students who also feel "religious angst," Hostyk recommends to "do that initial Google search... be open and don't be scared... Judaism and our community at YU can be such a beautiful thing. Trust in yourself and trust in the community."

Kaufman, however, does feel Stern helped her find her niche in religion.

"It was a process for me. It's kind of a struggle where you start... where you want to be and I think Stern is a great segue for finding that."



Stern students: as homogenous as they seem?

Julia Siegel

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## FEATURES

## Focus on Campus Life

## Under Your Parents' Roof

Renee Kestenbaum

"I sometimes get sympathetic glances and sounds when I tell someone that I commute," said Hannah Rozenblat, a second-semester freshman who lives with her parents in Brooklyn. "It's almost as if they're saying, 'I'm so sorry, that must be really hard!'"

It certainly can seem hard. Commuter students are often identified by overweight schoolbags, transit passes, or homemade lunches packed in Tupperware. Imagine having to pay with cash for a coffee at Le Bistro, or being unable to take a nap in your bed in the middle of the day. On top of that, popular legend presumes that commuter students feel they are missing out at Stern College for Women (SCW).

This semester, 128 students out of Beren Campus' nearly-1000 do not live in university housing. Those students can usually be divided into three categories: married students, fifth years, and commuters.

Married students commute from apartments where they live with spouses, though some of these couples live in university-licensed apartments in Washington Heights. Presumably, many married students have experienced the campus community, and furthermore they don't seem to be missing out on community spirit by moving to the Heights.

Some fifth-year students, or "super seniors," commute from apartments where they live with friends. Perhaps students who remain in Stern for a fifth year feel out of place in university housing, as many of their friends have already graduated. Certainly fifth-year students have experienced the campus community, so by commuting they are not missing out so much as moving on.

The third group of commuter students is single underclassmen who live with their families. Their reasons for commuting range from financial (university housing costs \$7,890 each year, exclusive of the mandatory \$3,014 meal plan) to cultural (some families, especially Sephardic ones, prefer their daughters live at home) to personal (some students find it easier to study at home, or dorm life seems unappealing to them).

I opted out of university housing in my first semester for reasons I suppose come closest to this last. I misunderstood the SCW community; before attending, I believed it was homogenous, that few others would share my goals, concerns, and interests. Being part of this type of campus community did not appeal to me, so I chose against it.

After witnessing our actual

campus community in my first semester, I moved into university housing to join it.

Taking part in and shaping the campus community is certainly easier when a student resides on campus. The dorming experience itself can be incredibly rewarding, as are our campus's countless extra-curricular offerings, ranging from volunteer projects to athletic teams to part-time jobs. Additionally, convenient and late-night access to the school facilities - libraries, science and computer labs, writing center, gym - is often crucial to a student's success. Convenience is arguably the greatest benefit to living on campus.

However, young, single students who commute can in fact join the campus community.

Rozenblat, an English Literature major and Art History minor, became involved in several extra-curricular activities in her first semester. She attended events and Shabbatonim, began volunteering at the Yeshiva University Museum, wrote an article for the Observer, was the props master for Stern College Dramatics Society's winter musical, and became a board member of the Creative Writing and Poetry Club.

Defying the commuter stereotype, Rozenblat focuses on her choices and commitment. "I was just willing to give up most of my free time outside college and dedicate myself to all these things. I would often come home late at night, sometimes even past midnight." If they choose to be, and plan ahead, commuter students can be part of the campus community.

For those times when being on campus is simply more convenient, commuters can be accommodated. Rozenblat slept in the dorms several times, due to events ending late. Additionally, commuter students can take advantage of lockers next to the gym to store heavy textbooks and winter gear, and they can buy coffees from the caf with their "caf cards," loaded in \$100 increments.

Commuters, additionally, have some advantages over dormers. While living on campus is convenient, living at home does come with its own perks. "You have everything you need," Rozenblat explained. "You don't have to go through the hassle of packing and unpacking every time you want to visit your parents for Shabbat or over vacation. You're with your family and you're in your comfort zone. And let's face it -- as delightful as pizza snaps are, they can't beat home-cooked meals. Also, the last time I checked pets weren't welcome in dorms."

Talia Rona

The many snowstorms this winter has made some New Yorkers reassess their decision to live in the tri-state area. With an unusually snowy winter, families may contemplate relocating to Florida, the only one out of 49 in the continental United States without any snowfall. With snow accumulating not inches but feet, even the tallest among us (for Jews, this would be 5'7") felt dwarfed standing next to those six-foot high snow piles!

Perhaps the first few inches were exciting, especially for those from the West Coast. However, after a couple of hours, commuters were mentally turning their children's snow angels into snow demons. As one by one each subway line stopped running due to hazardous conditions, the New Yorkers got ready to face the next three days cooped up inside their houses.

No, they did not have the option to leave. With cars buried and streets treacherous, one could hear many voices wondering aloud if Mayor Bloomberg did not realize that it snowed in all five boroughs, or if he just didn't care? For three or four days, the majority of the streets in Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and the Bronx were simply not plowed. Yes, Manhattan is a very important borough, but there are many, many people living in

She adds that "Living at home also helps you take a step back from the craziness that sometimes characterizes college life."

The commute itself can also be beneficial. It teaches independence. It creates additional time to wake up before class, time to do homework without distractions. Furthermore, it creates opportunities for the student to access herself on a deep level.

When I commuted, my trip gave me time to think about myself, and myself in relation to everyone else on 34<sup>th</sup> Street. Observing the workers, locals, and tourists of New York reminded me that SCW is just one slice of a whole population forging lives in a hectic, multilayered city.

On campus, introspection demands changing one's routine or moving from Brookdale to single rooms in Schottenstein and 36<sup>th</sup> Street, artificial methods to elicit the thoughts that can naturally develop while commuting.

For the reasons above, Rozenblat doesn't feel commuting is a hardship. "I'm not sorry," she said. "On the contrary, I love it."

the other four as well!

The optimistic women among Stern College for Women looked at the snow as a good excuse to purchase new, classier rain boots. Many of us have outgrown our



Talia Rona

rubber boots with the colorful polka dots and rainbow stripes, but never had a good enough reason to replace them. Well, here ya go! Two feet of snow! That should be adequate enough, right?

The men with positive outlooks took this opportunity to work on their muscles. Where as I silently prayed for a magical snowplow to appear out of thin air as I dug my car out of its personal snow mountain, there were those who were actually excited to shovel and exercise their biceps!

And of course, there were those lucky Yeshiva kids who had off from school. "Yay! Snow Day! No school!" read many of the Facebook statuses of my younger acquaintances. Lucky us, Stern College women! We persevered through the storm, took those finals, and will graduate with a solid education. Not even two feet of snow can stop us! Not even for one single day! \*Groan\*

After successfully liberating the car, the next mental debate was whether to move the car or not to move the car. The desire to go to work or pick up groceries may not outweigh the fact that upon returning there may not have a place to park it. And you just worked so hard to clear that parking spot for yourself! Now Brooklyn is notorious for their crazy drivers, but Elizabeth, New Jersey definitely wins for most ingenious/ chutzpah way to save your spot: by placing a kitchen chair in the empty space! See Exhibit A:

Besides for immobilizing the

East Coast population, the Blizzard of 2010 (and Blizzard #2 of 2011) caused many paranoid Jewish mothers to become even more paranoid. A typical scenario every time a child would leave the house, despite their age, went as follows:

Child: Mom, I'm going out!

Mother: Please be careful! It's icy outside!

Child: Okay Mom, I know.

Mother: Drive very slowly. You know it's very slippery on the ice.

Child: Yes Mom, I got it.

Mother: Hold onto the railing when you walk down the steps.

Child: Mom, I'm 20 years old. I think I can handle it.

Mother: Ok honey, but call me when you get there. I'm going to be worried the whole time.

Child: Please don't be worried. I'll be fine.

\*5 minutes later, cell phone rings\*

Child: Mom?

Mother: Is everything

okay??!

Child: Yes...

Mother: I got worried! I didn't hear from you!

Child: That's because I'm not there yet, Mom. You told me to drive slowly, remember?

Mother: Yes, I do. But Talia, don't you remember I told you not to talk on the phone while you are driving?!

Ok, maybe this is just my mom, but I have a feeling this scenario is pretty universal.

The timing of the first blizzard can be viewed as advantageous or super unlucky, depending upon personal situation. For the students of Stern College for Women, this happened during Reading Week, so it did not affect us so much.

However, many students were away attending Shabbat conventions over that weekend, such as NCSY in Los Angeles, CA or Chicago, IL. Many attendees extended their trips in Los Angeles for an extra few days because their flights were canceled while some students coming from Chicago dealt with a 14 hour bus ride back to New York. Though time off from school may seem fun, for students with finals it was anything but.

Everyone has had enough of the snow. We are all ready for spring. Done with the boots and the sweaters, on to the next season. No more slushy puddles at every street corner. Purim. Pesach. Warmth. Bring it on!...Wait--what's that? Forecast for tomorrow a "wintry mix?!" This has got to be a joke!



FEATURES

# Focus on Campus Life

## Inalienable Rights to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of... Miniskirts?

Elana Goldberg

Over winter break, Stern College for Women students received a surprise s-stud in their inboxes. Apart from the usual back-to-school well-wishing and event invitations, students discovered an e-mail co-signed by Dean Karen Bacon, the Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of SCW, and Dr. Victor Schwartz, University Dean of Students. The e-mail reiterated the long-established dress code policy at SCW, while citing students' increasing lack of adherence to the code and reaffirming that the dress code remains intact for all students, at all times, in all of the campus' academic facilities.

As stated in the email, the dress code requires "knee length dresses/skirts and tops that have sleeves". As a follow-up to the e-mail campaign, printed cards with the same message were placed on all students' beds at the beginning of the spring semester. While the dress code itself is only being reinforced, and not entirely revamped, many Stern women are up in arms over what they feel is an infringement on their basic rights as independent adult women to express themselves freely through mode of dress.

The impetus for this seemingly sudden dress code reinforcement came from faculty members' increasing exasperation with the attire many SCW women select to wear to class. Contrary to popular belief, the dress code always remained in effect for both Jewish and secular classes. Many teachers feel that students blatantly flout the rules.

"There were more students who were either oblivious to it or just not following it," says Dean Bacon, co-signer of the dress code letter. "Our university has the word Yeshiva in front of its name, and the women here know the expectations of appropriate dress in Jewish spheres. Some of the students were becoming a little bit lax, and caught up in current fashion without thinking what was appropriate for campus."

With the reworked dress code officially in motion, students might need to think harder about their fashion choices before venturing into Stern's academic buildings. The previous code specified only "proper length skirts", while the new dress code—as per the e-mail—indicates that skirts must reach to the knee. Though this seems like an arbitrary difference, for some SCW women it is the difference between tugging

down an American Apparel mini so that it grazes the mid-thigh, versus scouring the Midtown area in the age-old quest for the perfect jean skirt.



Julia Siegel

Students have expressed displeasure over the unmentioned change in wording that essentially makes the dress code more limiting. "If the school wanted to change the wording, they should have made it clear that they were introducing a new dress code," says SCW junior Tovah Silber-



Julia Siegel

mann. Other students appear to agree with Silbermann's sentiments; even students who normally wear knee-length skirts and modest tops have expressed displeasure over what they feel has been a general lack of information regarding the dress code. Students feel the dress code reinforcement suddenly sprung upon them, and

express resentment over not being presented with a clear, direct dress code upon their initial entrance to Stern College. While the dress code at present appears only in the Student Handbook, which is no longer in print, Dean Bacon confirms that the code will soon be permanently posted in electronic form.

Despite feeling out of the loop, a poll of approximately 150 SCW women, conducted by *The Observer*, revealed that a landslide majority of 92% of students fully understand the guidelines of the code.

The survey also revealed that a surprising 62% of SCW students have not noticed a marked improvement in overall adherence to the dress code since returning from winter break. It seems that many—though not all—of the students who ignored the dress code prior to winter break are still dressing in a similar manner. So what is everyone getting all self-righteous about? Despite the reinforcement of the dress code, it does not seem like much has really changed.

In fact, while the "new" dress code is admittedly slightly more restrictive than the previous code, measures to enforce the code will not become more punitive or harsher than any actions taken previously, which is essentially nothing. Students will likely not face punishments for dress code infractions.

Dean Bacon maintains that the objective of reinforcing the dress code is not to weed out and persecute rebels in the name of all that is *tznius* (modest). "We're talking about a community where we respect each other and our differences, but we accommodate [ourselves] to the institution we have chosen to attend," Dean Bacon says. "Within this context, if there are students who refuse to respect the dress code, they need to be introspective about why they feel the need to do [so]. I am optimistic that self-reflection will lead to a good outcome."

Having both the words "Yeshiva" and "University" in the school's name can lead to confusion about which word the administration favors. "It is important for SCW to clarify whether it is first and foremost a Yeshiva or a University," says an anonymous SCW junior. "Through measures such as the dress code ... I think they're making their priorities quite clear."

In light of all the favorable aspects attending a religious institution affords its students - Judaic

What do Stern women think of the dress code?

*The Observer* conducted an anonymous survey to find out.

Question: Do you personally adhere to the dress code?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes:	120	80.54%
No:	25	16.78%
Ambivalent:	4	2.68%
Total:	149	100.00%

"[There should be a dress code] as long as it [includes] pants"

"I LOVE DRESS CODE"

Question: Do you think Stern should have a dress code?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes:	84	56.38%
No:	45	30.20%
Ambivalent:	20	13.42%
Total:	149	100.00%

"How would they enforce a dress code?"

Question: Do you think Stern can/should enforce the dress code?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes:	59	40.14%
No:	71	48.30%
Ambivalent:	17	11.56%
Total:	147	100.00%

"They should have a dress code for Hebrew classes"

"We're adults, for G-ds sake, let us dress individually!"

Have you noticed increased dress code adherence post-winter break?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes:	34	23.13%
No:	92	62.59%
Ambivalent:	21	14.29%
Total:	147	100.00%

"There should be a dress code, but it shouldn't be based on *halacha*"

Do you understand the guidelines of the dress code?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes:	138	92.62%
No:	8	5.37%
Ambivalent:	3	2.01%
Total:	149	100.00%

"I understand the dress code, but don't care for it"

studies, breaks based around Jewish holidays - perhaps this new request is not a concession but a quid pro quo. Whether students wear a street-sweeping skirt or skin-tight jeggings on any given Sunday, as they walk into a Stern building they automatically represent the creed of Yeshiva University and all that it entails.



## FEATURES

## Focus on Campus Life

## Are You In? An Expose of Shabbat on the Stern Campus

Karen Steinberger

By Wednesday afternoon at the latest, a simple question is heard throughout the numerous areas of the Stern campus. It is shouted over heads in the elevators, whispered between friends during class time, and sometimes communicated through Facebook, the social medium of the Internet. The question is "Are you in?" To individuals not familiar with the etiquette of Yeshiva University a question like this can mean a plenitude of various activities but, to this particular student body, it only corresponds to one thing- one's plans for Shabbat.

Although students on the Stern campus travel to various places for Shabbat, many opt to "stay in." When such students answer the aforementioned question in the affirmative, a normal response is one of confusion and pity. Why in the world would one choose to stay on campus, far from the opportunity of a comfortable home of one's own or a friend's home? In response to this notion, one must understand the salient aspects of staying in for Shabbat that contribute to the feelings of comfort and community that some seem to think is sorely lacking.

The planning of the differing club Shabbatons usually happens decidedly before any student steps on campus. The varying club leaders pick their respective Shabbatons from a calendar in the previous year and receive approval from the Student Council and Dean Hait. Once this approval is recognized, the student leaders begin to brainstorm events and contact speakers that they feel would enrich and educate the students on campus.

Dean Hait explains that "each Shabbat has a different club which

caters to the different aspects of the diverse student body." With this in mind, it might seem difficult to balance a sense of community with the constant change of students that occurs every week and one would be correct in saying so. Thankfully, Yeshiva University employs a dynamic campus couple to stay in on campus every Shabbat and keep the feeling of community consistent. Tuvia

Lwowski and Rahel Bayer, along with their three-year-old daughter Maayan, have now been the campus couple in Stern for the past two years (see interview below).

Along with the very visible role the campus couple plays, staff behind the scenes contribute to the most important aspect of Shabbat- the food. Every Shabbat, Sarah Siegel (SCW '11) acts as a *meshgichah* (supervisor) to make sure that everything is kept kosher. This includes the overseeing of everything related to the kitchen, such as the ovens, refrigerators, and the all-important chulent crockpots.

After the food is all cooked, the job of the waitresses comes into

play. As this year's manager of the waitress staff, Abbie Wasserman (SCW '10) is in charge of "food, the waitresses, the seating and the menu, how many people come and if there are emergencies. If we have

appears to respond well. Daniela Aaron (SCW '12) says "that Shabbat is the time to bond with friends" while Lauren Tessler ('12) adds that it "makes the dorm a comfortable setting and brings *kedushah*

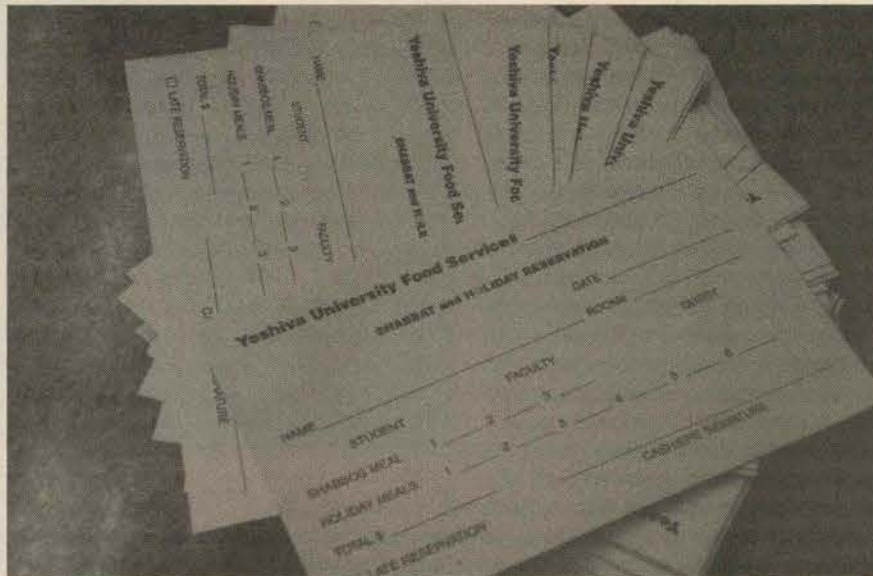
(holiness) to a place we usually work in." Sarah Gross (SCW '11) notes the positives of "staying in," saying that she sleeps in her own bed and does not have to "hassle with trains."

The men of the Wilf campus echo the women. For example, Aryeh Twersky (YC '11) says, "I do like Shabbat in Stern. It's enjoyable. You can go to the lounges and chill out with your friends." Similarly, Yitzchok Dawidowicz (YC '12) explains "while both Stern and Yeshiva College are both undergraduate schools of the same Yeshiva University, with their respective campuses being so far apart, it is often hard to remember that. By spending the weekend at Stern, it reminds you that we are all part of the same school and all part of the same community." These students elucidate that on Shabbat the Stern campus, a feeling of a cohesive community is often achieved.

There are certain factors, however, that detract from this sense of community. Benjamin Shai (YC '12) accurately relates that he does not venture to Midtown for Shabbat because of the "awkward social scene." He continues to say it is often "overwhelming" and he stays with his own friends, stymieing him from meeting anyone new. Tessler echoes this notion, but adds that the "the awkward co-ed interaction" can be avoided "by not caring the taboo of approaching guys."

However, for some, Shabbat programming can be frustrating. The Shabbatons that dominate the months of November and December are mostly seminary reunions, in which Stern hosts teachers and alumni of various seminaries. Such Shabbatonim are not open to men and can often alienate "the regulars" on the Stern campus, bringing feelings of discomfort and a lack of welcoming. Some students have suggested that spreading these Shabbatons over various weekends might alleviate feelings of exclusivity.

Despite these complaints, the combination of familiar faces and routines produces feelings of warmth and community among one's peers in the Stern campus. Shabbat is an especially unique time where students are more relaxed and thus truly have a chance to understand one another. Even with the tremendous amount of diversity found in Yeshiva University, Shabbat stands as a time to coalesce as one entity. When asked if there is a sense of community on the Stern Campus during Shabbat, Meira Zack (SCW '11) a resident advisor, simply replied "definitely."



Julia Siegel

to hire more waitresses, if there's a mistake in programming, etc. I also ensure that the work atmosphere for the head waitresses and waitresses is efficient, healthy and happy".

The resident advisors and graduate advisors also play a significant role in creating a sense of community. Every Shabbat, resident advisors set up the lounges with abundant snacks and tea and remain with their peers, engaging in conversation and playing games, giving one a feeling of home.

As seen, there is a tremendous amount of planning that goes into the twenty five hours that make up Shabbat and the student body

## The Shabbat Ima and Abba: An Interview with Tuvia Lwowski and Rahel Bayer

Karen Steinberger

## 1. How did you find this job?

We were working as the Youth Directors in a shul (synagogue) in NJ, and two Stern students (Yaira Dubin and Rachael Fried) were working for us as NCSY advisors. On Shavuot in 2009, they and Mollie Scharfman were at our home for the Chag. As we discussed our plans to move to NYC after 4 years in NJ, they suggested we apply for the Stern Campus Couple position- the rest is history!

## 2. What is the best part of your job on the Stern campus?

We really enjoy the opportunity to interact with the students in an informal setting. We were surprised at just how diverse the student body is here!

## 3. What was your favorite Shabbaton and why?

Well, the Canada Club Shabbaton is easily my favorite! (Tuvia). No, in all seriousness, it's difficult for us to choose just one. Each Shabbat presents an opportunity for students to hear from engaging speakers and celebrate Shabbat through a unique perspective. Our favorite Shabbatonim are the ones where there's sufficient downtime to interact with the students.

## 4. What advice do you have for students who want to stay in?

Neither of us had the opportunity to attend Stern or YU as students. In our respective universities, Shabbat was easily the highlight of each week. We both took tremendous pride in being part of a Minyan and attending Shabbat meals and Onegs. That same opportunity presents itself here on campus. The growth in the Stern Shabbat Community precedes our arrival to Murray Hill, but we have been privileged to see an influx of students, many of whom live locally, choose to stay in and be a part of each exciting Shabbat. Our advice would be to try it out - and try it out more than once! Each Shabbat has its own flavor. The opportunity to be involved and help grow the program is available to everybody.

## 5. How do you attempt to foster a sense of community on Shabbat?

We feel that the most important factor in fostering a sense of community here is consistency. Whether it's Minyan in the Cultural Centre or just Maayan's interaction with the students (she refers to many of you during the week by your first names and as her friends), we hope that our presence here every week provides continuity from week to week. Familiarity with each other and working together each week to enjoy Shabbat to its fullest is what makes it feel like home here. Each student plays a role in the development of this community - we're just thrilled to be a part of it.



## SPORTS

## "What Happened to My Legs?" My Marathon Journey

Basyah Klyman

"Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must outrun the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning in Africa, a lion wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the slowest gazelle, or it will starve. It doesn't matter whether you're the lion or the gazelle- when the sun comes up, you better be running." - Roger Bannister (the first man to break the four minute mile)

4 AM Marathon Morning. We pulled on purple HASC T-shirts and headed to the American Airlines Arena in Miami. Two hours later, we stood shivering in the mid-fifty degree weather along with runners from all fifty states, as well as seventy-nine other countries. Each runner was given a "bib"- the number and tracking device fastened to the runner's shirts which records the starting and ending time of each runner. With such a rush of people, it takes between 16 and 22 minutes for all of the runners to pass the starting line.

The pack of runners took off over the cruise-ship-lined McArthur Causeway en route to South Beach. I had spent months training for this moment and I knew I was ready to run the full 26.2 miles of the ING Miami Marathon. Yoni Mond, a fellow Yeshiva University runner, described his starting line feelings; "The start is always the most emotional part for me. Once I start the race, I am confident enough in my training to know that I will do well. However, getting to the starting line fully healthy, feeling strong, and ready to run makes me

feel blessed and lucky. It is one of my favorite parts of the race."

As a member of the cross-country running team at Stern College, I run competitively along with fellow marathon runners Meirah Frieden, Malka Krieger, Elizabeth Leibowitz, Estee Mizrachi, Yoni Mond, Yehuda Safier and Adam Weiss. The women compete on 5k courses (around 3.5 miles), and the men on 8k (around 5 miles). After the cross-country season ended, with the men taking the victory at HVMACs, I was overcome with running withdrawal. Despite the grueling season, I was addicted to running, so I, along with my teammates, turned to marathons for

motivation.

During the cross country season, the women train by running an average of 20 miles per week, while the men run 30-mile weeks. In order to train for the marathon, our daily four-mile runs doubled to 8-mile runs, and on the weekends, we pushed up to 20 miles a pop. With Marathon Day looming, each of us, men and women, would run 40-45 miles per week. While I took the chance to explore every crevice in lower Manhattan, Central Park, and the East and West River, other runners ran roundtrip to Teaneck or Brooklyn to pack in their miles.

Training in Manhattan this past winter was a brutally painful experience. As anyone who has walked between the Stern buildings knows, gloves, hats and sweat-shirts do little to ward off freezing temperatures. I invested in Under-Armor shirts to wick away sweat in an attempt to stay warm during my runs. Numb fingers were a relief from tingling soreness. Not surprisingly, my life became a conglomerate of training, stretching, and ice wraps.

However, working as a team

were a constant reminder of the goal I was working hard to accomplish- and of course a great distraction during boring classes.

Without exception, every YU runner I have asked agrees with the following statement: though marathon training is exceptionally difficult, we would run another marathon. During the marathon, after separating with Estee Mizrachi at Mile 20, I spent miles 20 to 24 alongside a woman who was running her 93rd marathon. By that point, I could barely lift my feet off the ground. Each stride was a victory of mind over body. It was more painful to walk than to keep running. All I could think about was lying down on the pavement and crying from the exhaustive aching.

This woman, whose name I do not know, encouraged me through those never-ending miles. She told me that she ran to honor her mother, who had passed away three years ago from cancer. "Determination... beautiful...angel," are the words she kept repeating to me. She taught me to look beyond myself - to be empowered by the cause for which I was running. There was no more personal glory; I was running not just for myself, I was running for Camp HASC, my cross-country team and as part of the Jewish people. Although I do not know who she was, she reminded me what I was running for. I

do not know who she was, but she reminded me what I was running for. As Roman Yacubov, another member of our group, stated "In a race, like in love and war, don't give up. Reach the core."

This woman pushed me through the most agonizing miles I have ever endured. I had felt pain before while running, felt my gut seize up as I sprinted the last hundred feet, wondering whether I could beat the girl in front of me or would I throw up before I passed her. That sickness never lasted more than a few minutes, and I could always push through with the encouragement of my teammates shouting my name and the finish line in sight.

This feeling at the marathon was different. My core was supporting me, I could even speak as I ran, but my legs were rebelling; they did not want to keep moving.

was an absolutely incredible feeling. When I saw my friends cheering for me, I just started sprinting like I've never done before and I felt like I was flying. I was suddenly

re-energized and filled with such adrenaline that I felt like I could conquer the world and do anything."

I finished my first marathon in 4 hours and 38 minutes, reaching my personal goal. Adam Weiss, a fellow runner, put it best "There is no greater feeling than

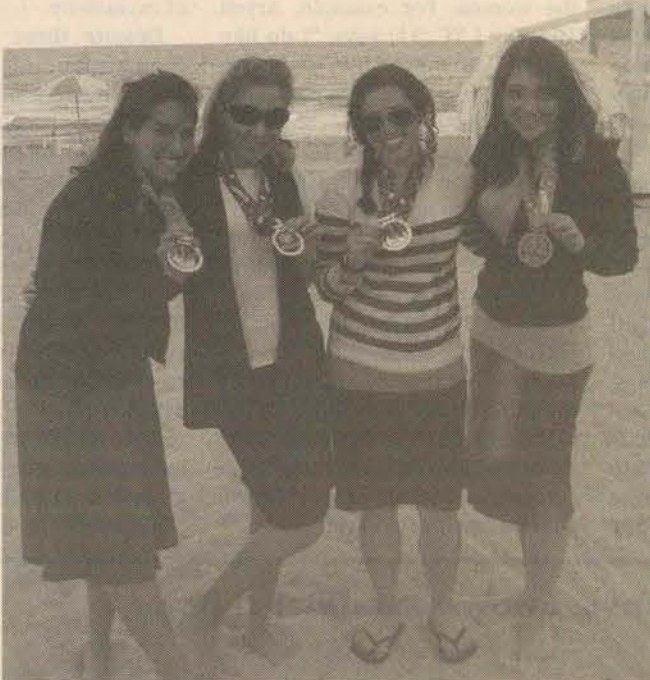
accomplishing a goal that required a tremendous amount of sacrifice, dedication, and passion. Once you experience it once, you will constantly crave that feeling."

I recently ran for the first time since the Marathon, fighting through leftover aches and soreness. While on that run, I asked myself: why do I keep running? Is it worth the pain, the doctors, the exhaustion, the cold? In the words of the great Roger Bannister, "We run, not because we think it is doing us good, but because we enjoy it and cannot help ourselves... No one can say, 'You must not run faster than this, or jump higher than that.' The human spirit is indomitable." And as Yehuda Safier, a fellow Maccabee runner says, "I run, therefore I am."



Pessy Leibowitz

(from left to right) Pessy Leibowitz, Yehuda Safier, Yoni Mond, Adam Weiss, and Meirah Freiden.



Pessy Leibowitz

(from left to right) Basyah Klyman, Pessy Leibowitz, Meirah Freiden and Estee Mizrachi post marathon.

made the experience well worth it. Mond says, "I trained together with my fellow YU students, and without them I wouldn't have done as well as I did. Team YU prepared me for the race and it was a pleasure training with them."

During the long months of training, the men's co-captain, Ben Joslin, led an 18-mile run through Central Park with six men and two women. Though I was unable to walk for a full week after that run, I loved every step. As my fellow marathoners passed each other in the halls at school, we would call out our daily miles and race over for high-fives. Ongoing Facebook threads, trash-talk and teasing

Headed to Houston?  
The marathon trials for the 2012 US Olympic team will be held in Houston, Texas next January.

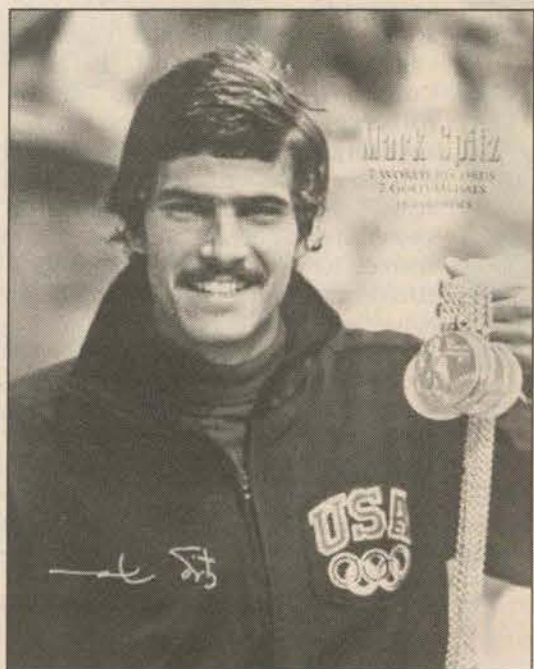


SPORTS

**Anu Ratzim V'haym Ratzim:  
Mark Spitz – Greatest Swimmer  
of All Time**

Mark Spitz began swimming as soon as he learned to stand. When Spitz's family moved to Hawaii around Mark's second birthday, Mark was overjoyed; he swam in Waikiki Beach almost every day. As his mother, Lenore, told TIME in 1968, "You should have seen that little boy dash into the ocean. He'd

run like he was trying to commit suicide." Motivated by his great love of swimming, Spitz had already set a world record by the time he was ten-



freestyle and beat Heidenreich by half a stroke, winning his fourth gold medal of the seven he would eventually win that Olympics. Furthermore, each gold medal was won by beating a previous world record.

Although Spitz should have left the Munich Olympics in high spir-

its, as the only athlete ever to win seven gold medals in one Olympics, catastrophe struck just a few hours after he won his seventh gold; terrorists murdered eleven Israeli

athletes. Due to Spitz's Jewish heritage, America feared that he too was under great danger. Surrounded by security, Spitz was whisked away from Munich before he could be targeted for an attack.

For many years, Mark Spitz was undisputedly the most celebrated swimmer of all time, ranking 33<sup>rd</sup> on ESPN's list of 50 greatest athletes. A few years ago, at the 2008 Olympics, Michael Phelps won eight golds, beating Mark Spitz's long-held record of most gold medals won in a single Olympics. This came as no surprise to Spitz, who had claimed after the 2004 Olympics that Phelps could win nine gold medals in 2008 if the Olympic Committee would accommodate him by allotting more than half an hour in between two races.

After hearing that Phelps had dashed his record, Mark Spitz was very happy. "Listen, this has lasted for 36 years," Spitz said during an interview. "It's a long time. It's about time that somebody else takes the throne. And I'm very happy for him. I really truly am." Spitz felt honored that Phelps had set dreams based on Spitz's own accomplishments. Through a great sense of determination, Spitz became a decorated swimmer, a successful entrepreneur, and a noble human being.

**Congratulations to...**

Congratulations to basketball player Shir Fuchs on being named Skyline's Player of the Week and Hudson Valley Women's Athletic Conference's co-Player of the Week.

Congratulations to basketball player Avi Varnai on being named to the Skyline Honor Roll and Hudson Valley Women's Athletic Conference's co-Player of the Week.

Congratulations to the 13 Yeshiva University runners who completed the IMG Miami Marathon and Half Marathon on January 31, 2011! For many, running is simply a means to getting in shape. For others, it is a passion. These Yeshiva University students used their passion for a good cause - to raise an enormous amount of money for Camp HASC, Chai Lifeline, and Yachad!

Full Marathon:

- Malkie Krieger - 4:11
- Estee Mizrachi - 4:33
- Bassy Klyman - 4:38

Half Marathon:

- Adam Weiss - 1:31
- Yoni Mond - 1:31
- Yehuda Safier - 1:37
- Meirah Freiden - 1:58
- Bella Frankel - 1:59
- Elizabeth Leibowitz - 2:52
- Roman Yakubov - 2:14
- Miriam Apter - 2:20
- Jen Saibel - 2:59

**Other Notes in Yeshiva Athletics:**

Due to budget cuts, we will not be able to start a softball team this year. However, the athletics department has generously offered to fund a Friday morning/afternoon intramural league extending from March until reading week. If you are interested, email Becky Weiss, becky184@gmail.com or Meira Lerner, mclerner@yu.edu.

**Quotes of the Month**

*"It's always about wanting to one-up myself from the day before. There's never an absolute 100% perfect performance, but going out and striving for that perfect performance is what keeps me going."*

- Cat Osterman (Team U.S.A. Softball pitcher)

*"I've learned that finishing a marathon isn't just an athletic achievement. It's a state of mind; a state of mind that says anything is possible."*

- John Hanc (Sports writer)

*"Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit. We are all the same in this notion: The potential for greatness lives within each of us."*

- Wilma Rudolph (First American female runner to win three gold medals at a single Olympics)

*"A winner is someone who recognizes his God-given talents, works his tail off to develop them into skills, and uses these skills to accomplish his goals."*

- Larry Bird (NBA Hall-of-Famer)



## ARTS AND CULTURE

## 1776: Is the Musical Accurate or Off- Key?

Meirah Shedlo

The movie musical *1776* portrays the pivotal events in the founding of our nation. Based on a Broadway play of the same name that opened in 1969, this heart-warming film depicts the events leading up to the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It shows the struggles of Continental Congressmen John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson as they work to convince the American colonies to support a resolution providing for independence from England. The songs are catchy and captivating tunes that create a playful tone to bring the script to life.

Of course, the founding fathers did not spontaneously break into song and dance as in the movie, but the question remains: how historically accurate is this portrayal of this momentous event in our nation's history? In commemoration of President's Day, it might be intriguing to consider how popular conceptions of these events compare to historical reality.

According to *The Columbia Companion to American History on Film* by Peter C. Rollins, "inaccuracies pervade *1776*, though few

are very troubling." The authors of the play, Peter Stone and Sherman Edwards, acknowledge that while a few changes have indeed been

made for dramatic effect, the majority of the characters and the events have been treated as accurately as possible. In fact, large portions of both the script and song lyrics have been taken directly from the writings and letters of the historical figures involved. For example, the lyrics to the tuneful exchanges between John Adams and

his wife Abigail Adams are derived from their letters to each other.

Furthermore, the description in the play of Adams as "obnoxious

es to himself as "obnoxious" in his autobiography. It should be noted that according to biographer David McCullough, John Adams was self-

deprecating and was not nearly as unpopular as he described himself to be; he was very well respected at the Continental Congress. However, although personages are sometimes altered for effect, the movie succeeds in humanizing the oft-un-touchable

tray accurately. Perhaps some of the most humorous details relate to Benjamin Franklin, the oldest Congressman. He was known for his wit, which is represented quite clearly on screen. In fact, his biographer Walter Isaacson aptly notes that "Benjamin Franklin is the founding father who winks at us." Franklin was also prone to drowsing off during Congressional proceedings, as is portrayed in the film.

In the song "The Egg", Adams, Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson discuss what the national bird should be, and Franklin asserts that it should be a turkey. This is fact as well; the historical Franklin asserted that the eagle, the chosen national emblem, is a bird of inferior moral character that does not "get his living honestly" and is prone to laziness. In contrast, the turkey is a model of courage and a native of America. While his vision did not come to pass, Franklin's remark is both humorous and true.

Many other aspects of the movie are also historically accurate. The weather in Philadelphia that



John Trumbull

Artist John Trumbull depicted the events of 1776 in his iconic painting, "The Declaration of Independence"

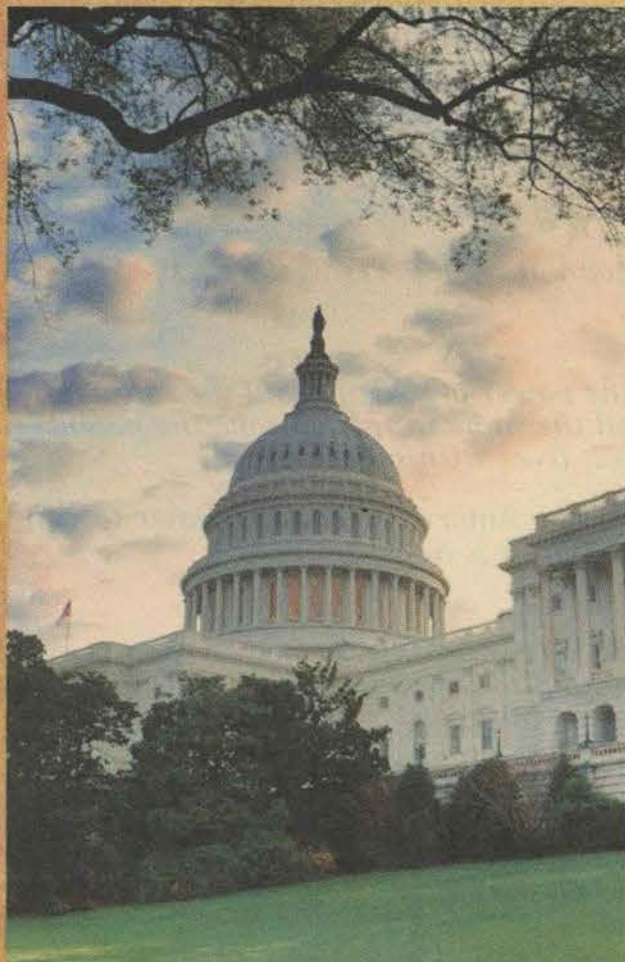
and disliked" is taken from his own description of himself in a letter, as well as from his referenc-

founders.

There are myriad other details that the playwrights did por-

See 1776 page 13

# Make a Difference



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ARTS AND CULTURE

1776: Is the Musical Accurate or Off- Key?

1776 from page 12

spring was in fact rather hot and humid, as the congressmen lament in the opening song "Sit Down, John". Indeed, according to Stone, Thomas Jefferson was responsible for delivering the daily weather report. The Library of Congress possesses his weather record from 1776- 1818. Jefferson was also an accomplished violinist, as admired by his wife Martha in the song "He Plays the Violin". In addition, as humorously depicted in the film, New York did abstain on many votes including voting in favor of independence, since they had not received instructions to support the resolution from the New York convention.

Although much of the show remains faithful to its historic inspiration, there are certain inaccuracies such as those alluded to by Rollins. Perhaps the greatest inaccuracy in the play is the concluding sequence, in which the delegates gather to sign the Declaration of Independence in a dramatic and moving scene. In reality, the Declaration was not actually signed on July 4<sup>th</sup>, the date it was announced to the citizens of the thirteen colonies. It was signed over a period of several months; in fact, it is probable that the final signature was not added until 1777.

Furthermore, Virginian Richard Henry Lee's proposal of independence was officially passed on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, and the debate over the phrasing of the Declaration came afterward. Therefore, although the play implies that independence was contingent upon acceptance of each phrase in the declaration, this was not true. When the debate over the wording occurred, the congressmen had already decided to declare independence. This was altered in the film to build momentum for dramatic effect.

There was also no record kept of the debates surrounding the wording of the Declaration. However, Jefferson provided the text of his original draft as well as the revised version in his autobiography, from which the authors of the play drew conclusions and imagined each member during the proceedings.

Another departure from histori-

cal accuracy takes place in the debate over the clause referring to the slave trade in the Declaration. In the film, the southern delegates only conceded to vote in favor of independence with the removal of Jefferson's passage condemning slavery. Although the issue was hotly debated, in reality, none of the delegates marched out in protest demanding deletion of the clause. And in any event, this took place after the matter of independence was decided.

The above are just a few examples of both the historical truths and inaccuracies of 1776. While there are relatively minor inaccuracies throughout the film, the overall effect is true to the historical events leading to America's national independence. The film is certainly worth watching for a gratifying and entertaining take on our nation's history.



## Shaloms Bombay

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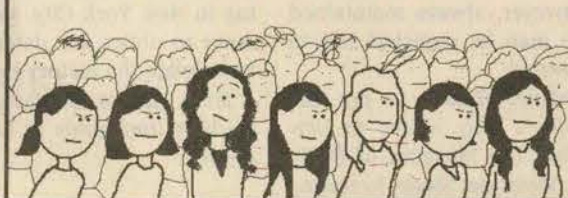
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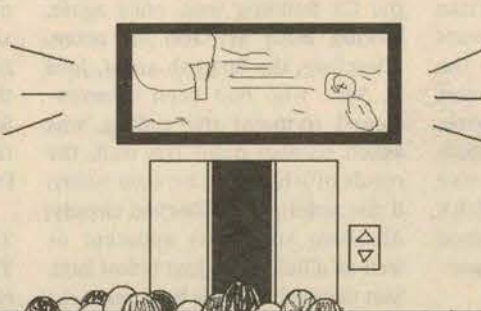
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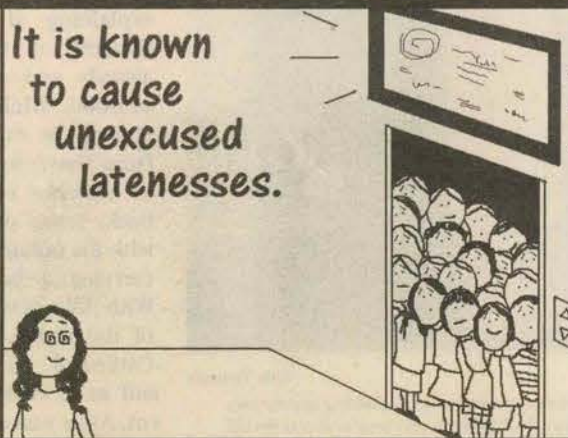
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BY Sari



## ARTS AND CULTURE

## Rockefeller Jr. and Abby's Legacy

Gila Yarmush

Rockefeller Center. Two words which invoke two great American icons: the Rockefeller family, and the iconic complex itself, Rockefeller Center.



Atlas from the front

John D. Rockefeller Sr. was born in New York in 1839 and became the patriarch of one of the wealthiest families in American history. Rockefeller Sr.'s fortune was earned through oil refinement. He founded the Standard Oil Company in 1870, which eventually held a monopoly over oil refineries in the United States until the company was dissolved in the 1890s due to anti-monopoly laws. It was with this money that his son, John D. Rockefeller Jr., and Rockefeller Jr.'s wife, Abby Aldrich, created Rockefeller Center. Over the course of its development, Rockefeller Center became home to some of New York City's greatest and, at that time, controversial works of art.

The main building of Rockefeller Center, now known as the General Electric (GE) Building, has two side entrances on 49th and 50th Streets. Above both entrances are engravings of nude figures. While these engravings were, and still are, appreciated by the public, they were



The main entrance in the GE Building and the only entrance Rockefeller Jr. ever used to access the GE Building.

not appreciated by Rockefeller Jr., as the nudity offended his devoutly Northern Baptist sensibilities. Consequently, Rockefeller Jr. never used either entrance and only accessed the GE Building through the front entrance on Rockefeller Plaza between 49th and 50th Streets. Above the main entrance is a quote from Isaiah 33:6; "wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times." This verse was not blithely chosen. After over a year of arguing with those involved in the building's design, Rockefeller Jr. agreed to the Isaiah quote. Rockefeller Jr. disclosed that his insistence on a proper quote stemmed from his wish for this entrance to emanate a tone that he felt was personally inviting.

The artwork on and around Rockefeller Center not only offended Rockefeller Jr., but also his across-the-street

neighbor, St. Patrick's Cathedral, located on Fifth Avenue between 51st and 52nd. The Cathedral was completed in 1879 when the surrounding Midtown area was not yet developed. Thus, when Rockefeller Jr. commissioned Atlas, the Titan who

bears the world on his shoulders, to be erected opposite the Cathedral, the Church was upset and complained to Rockefeller Jr. that they did not want a pagan deity in such close proximity to the church.

Rockefeller Jr. took this complaint to the artist Lee Lawrie. Lawrie assuaged Rockefeller Jr.'s concerns, explaining that he had thought of the problem already and arrived at a solution. While the statue appears as Atlas the Titan from the front, it appears as someone else from the back: Jesus on the cross, with his outstretched arms, carrying a heavy burden. With this new perspective of the statue, St. Patrick's Cathedral was appeased and as is currently apparent, Atlas was erected. It was not just St. Patrick's

Cathedral that found some of the art at Rockefeller Center controversial, but the American public as well. A fresco is visible on the wall upon entering the GE Building from its main entrance. Interestingly, this fresco was not the original piece of artwork chosen for the wall. Initially, Diego Rivera, the famed Mexican artist, painted the highly controversial fresco titled "Man at the Crossroads Looking with Hope and High Vision to the Choosing of a New and Better Future." The sketch of the fresco had been approved by Nelson Rockefeller, Rockefeller Jr. and Abby's son, and was painted. However, when Rivera painted the fresco he added a portrait of Lenin that had not appeared in the sketch that Nelson Rockefeller had approved. Rivera most likely added the portrait as a means of regaining favor with the Communist Party following his expulsion.

The notion of Lenin in the fresco, inevitably, caused prompt public outcry, and the Rockefellers

demand that Lenin be removed from the piece; Rivera, refused to comply with their request. The Rockefellers and Rivera negotiated over the Lenin portrait for 11 months. Rivera, however, remained resolute in his decision and claimed that

he would rather have the work destroyed than the portrait of Lenin removed. The Rockefellers took Rivera up on his offer and the work was destroyed, but not before photographs were taken, which can be viewed online. (The destruction of the Rivera piece led to the still-held opinion that Abby Aldrich was a destroyer of great art. In reality, Abby was nothing of the sort, but rather, a great advocate of art who co-founded the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)).

The wall in the main entrance of the GE Building was, once again, lacking both art and an artist. Therefore, the Spanish artist, Jose M. Sert, who had been commissioned to paint the ceiling, was asked to also paint the wall, the result of which can be seen today. If the painting is observed closely, Abraham Lincoln is apparent as well as a bald man just below him. Sert claimed that the bald man was the great American Ralph Waldo



Atlas from the back

Gila Yarmush

## Around NYC

Have some extra time between classes? Looking for a change in routine? Check out our recommendations for fun activities this month!

**March 8, 2011, 12:00PM**

*Castle and its Kingdom Tour*

*A tour of the grounds surrounding by Belvedere Castle in Central Park*

Call 212-772-0210 for directions

Visit [www.centralparknyc.org](http://www.centralparknyc.org) for more information

**March 10-16, 2011**

*15th Annual Sephardic Film Festival*

Center for Jewish History

15 West 16th Street, New York, NY 10011

Visit [www.sephardicfilmfest.org](http://www.sephardicfilmfest.org) to purchase tickets

**Ongoing through March 27, 2011**

*Houdini: Art and Magic*

The Jewish Museum

1109 Fifth Avenue at 92nd Street, New York, NY 10128

Visit [www.thejewishmuseum.org](http://www.thejewishmuseum.org) for ticket information

**Monday, March 28, 2011, 7:00PM**

*Writers on Writers Series-A discussion with Claire Harmon*

*Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World*

86th Street Barnes and Nobles

150 East 86th Street, New York, NY 10028, 212-369-2180

**Ongoing through Sunday, July 24, 2011**

*There is a Mirror in My Heart: Reflections on a Righteous Grandfather*

Yeshiva University Museum at the Center for Jewish History

15 West 16th Street, New York, NY 10011. (212)-294-8330.

Visit [www.yumuseum.org](http://www.yumuseum.org) for Museum hours.

Note: Students with valid ID enter for free.

Emerson. Emerson, however, had a full head of hair, thus many people did not believe Sert's claim. One popular theory was that the bald man in Sert's painting was actually Francisco Franco, the Spanish fascist leader, as it was suspected that Sert had fascist sympathies. Sert, however, always maintained that the man he depicted was in fact Emerson.

Rockefeller Center is not the Rockefeller's only legacy in New York City. The Museum of Modern Art, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, United Nations,

and Rockefeller University are all linked to the great family. In New York City it is not just the people who have stories, but the buildings as well. Every brick and stone, every intricate design that adorns a building on this island, most likely has a story behind it. When walking in New York City, take a moment to notice the detail and acknowledge the history behind it.

Many thanks to Brooks, the incredible tour guide at Rockefeller Center.



## ARTS AND CULTURE

## Tribute to a Legacy: Sebastian Mendes

Hannah Rozenblat

Art, in its capacity to reflect reality and communicate values, becomes a powerful vehicle for expression. When art comes from the heart, it enters the heart, and that is certainly true of the Yeshiva University Museum's new exhibit by Sebastian Mendes titled "There is a Mirror in My Heart: Reflections on a Righteous Grandfather."

A combination of drawings, mixed media, and performance, the exhibit pays tribute to the artist's grandfather, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, a Portuguese Consul-General who rescued approximately 30,000 lives during World War II by issuing visas against the orders

of the Portuguese government. These heroic actions resulted in the destruction of his career and the loss of his source of income, and he died in 1954 in poverty, still disfavored by his own government. It was more than a decade later that he was posthumously honored by Yad Vashem as one of the Righteous Among the Nations. It is the exploration of this historical legacy that Sebastian Mendes shares in his exhibit in a variety of ways.

Using art to pay homage to his grandfather, Sebastian Mendes created a series of drawings that take different forms but share an identical theme, paying a collective remembrance to the refugees saved through his grandfather's efforts. Two of the walls of the

gallery are covered with a total of thirty ink drawings. Each drawing contains one thousand names of supposed refugees with numbers ranging from 1 to 30,000, followed by Mendes's name, as the information would have appeared on the issued visas. Some draw-



Zachary Paul Levine, Yeshiva University Museum

ings contain specific images within the mass of names; in one of the drawings, a man's hat can be seen, and in another, a bell is distinctly visible.

The second section of the gallery, "Bread Reliquary Suitcases," is a room full of suitcases of bread, each suitcase symbolizing another individual's life. The dried pieces of bread, which are symbolically meaningful both to Jews and Catholics, contain anglicized Jewish last names, which are typically names of elements, colors, or materials, such as Silver, Stone, Glass, Singer, and Gold. The inspiration for marking these pieces of bread with names came from the practice of prisoners in camps during World War II, who would communicate with each other by inscrib-

ing messages on pieces of bread, which can be easily and safely carried on one's person. The nondescript exteriors of the suitcases protect their owners' secrets, revealing nothing about their personal identities, but the richly colored interiors hold pieces of bread that tell their stories.

In addition, Mendes includes an in-gallery performance exhibit — the artist's way of recognizing the work of his grandfather. Each Friday while the exhibition is open, Mendes sits at a large table, representing his grandfather's actions by writing names, one after another, until a total of 30,000 names is reached.

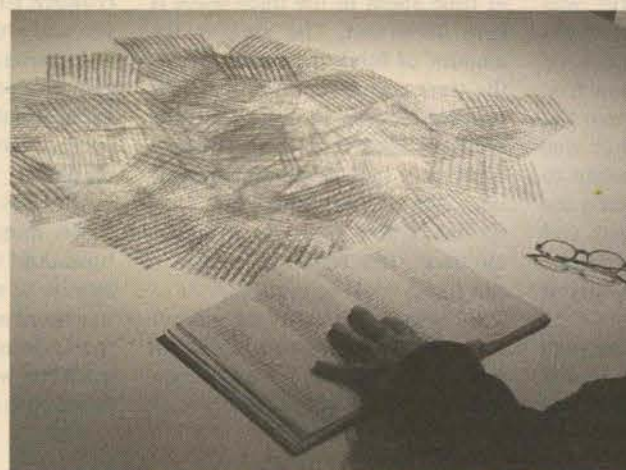
The exhibit, which is striking and pow-

erful even to those unfamiliar with the legacy of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, is undoubtedly yet more meaningful to those whose lives have been personally touched by the actions of this righteous individual. A woman, recognizing the name of Mendes in the museum, checked her mother's visa, discovering it to have been signed by Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Charles Teschner, one of the recipients of a visa from Mendes, spoke at the opening of the exhibit, expressing his gratitude. Sebastian Mendes, who has met many of the recipients of his grandfather's visas, described it as a "phenomenal experience" for

him.

In addition to his exhibit at YUM, Sebastian Mendes is a professor at Stern College for the spring semester, teaching an advanced drawing class as well as an honors seminar class on Materializing History and Experience, which directly connects to the YUM installation, his exhibit being his personal way of materializing his ancestor's history. This class, which has appealed to students pursuing a variety of majors, explores how art can be used to commemorate both personal and historical experience, with emphasis on the Holocaust.

Avital Chizhik, who is majoring in English and is in Mendes's seminar class, shared, "I'm a strong



Zachary Paul Levine, Yeshiva University Museum

believer in commemorating the past through art form. Especially as time goes on, and memories of the Holocaust threaten to fade away, it's crucial that we come up with ways of remembering it that make it real. Art is one of those amazing ways in which people can connect emotionally to a historical event, no matter where or when it

happened. It makes history personal, by bringing in the viewer or reader to a very specific moment in time."

And Mendes has certainly created an opportunity for viewers to emotionally connect to his grandfather's legacy through the art that he has done commemorating his ancestor's actions. In order to demonstrate the ideas discussed in his class, Mendes took his students to see his exhibit. Samantha Feldman, an art studio major who has already seen the exhibit twice, remarked in response to the experience, "It is very courageous of Mendes to want to share this personal part of his life with others so that they can learn from his

grandfather's courageous acts. To me, his drawings are a visual educational tool to actually show other people how someone saved 30,000 lives. They express the extreme hard work and display the monstrous task that one person did."

This emotionally charged and historically significant exhibit is open until July 24<sup>th</sup>, and entrance is free for

Yeshiva University students with valid ID. This artistic response to the legacy of a man whose heroic actions saved thousands of lives is not an exhibit you want to miss.

Hannah Rozenblat is a freshman at Stern College, majoring in English.



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## SCIENCE AND HEALTH

### Microwave Magic for the Stern Dorm Room

Rivkah Rogawski

For Stern students cramped into Brookdale suites or Schottenstein cubicles, trekking to the cafeteria on a cold winter night can be painfully unappealing. This is especially true for out-of-towners or hearty eaters, who are often watching their cafeteria card balance to ensure that it doesn't sink too low and hardly relish the thought of dropping \$11 on a chicken dinner. However, most jaded caf-goers simply assume that without full kitchens, they are prevented from preparing tasty and nutritious meals.

Thanks to Percy Spencer, the electronics engineer who discovered the heating effects of microwaves, such students need not despair. In 1945, Spencer was working on a radar set that would emit microwaves—a category of electromagnetic waves of low frequency—when he realized that the chocolate bar in his pocket was starting to melt. Spencer began to tweak his radar set by trapping the microwave rays in a metal box, and was later able to reach such culinary heights as popping popcorn and boiling an egg.

Microwaves work because, like Spencer's chocolate bar, most foodstuffs contain water and

other molecules, such as proteins or fats, which are able to absorb the energy from the microwaves. The absorption of the microwaves cause the molecules to move faster—a phenomenon that is macroscopically perceived as an increase in temperature.

Of course, this scientific and historic background is completely irrelevant to the practical applications of a dorm room microwave to prepare hot, yummy meals. Using a microwave, any student can cheaply prepare meals like quinoa, rice, lentils, pasta, baked potatoes, and even fruit crisps.

Microwave cooking generally takes  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the time that traditional cooking does and the length of time spent in the microwave is very important. The smaller the amount of food, the more precise the timing must be. It is also important to keep in mind that microwave-cooked food continues to cook after it is removed from the microwave. Therefore, the food should be left to sit for around 5 minutes after removal so that it can finish cooking evenly.

In order to cook in the microwave, all that is needed is a set of microwaveable bowls and plastic pans—Tupperware containers work

really well. Many vendors, such as Nordic Ware, sell specialized containers for use in the microwave; however, these are not necessary for the beginner microwave cook. It is also helpful to have a microwaveable plate, a sharp knife, and a set of utensils.

In order to prepare starches and beans, such as quinoa, rice, or lentils, the desired quantity of grain is placed in a microwaveable bowl and covered with double that amount of water. Cover the utensil, place it in the microwave, and cook it on high according to these proportions: 9 minutes for  $\frac{1}{2}$  a cup,  $\frac{3}{4}$  c in 12 minutes, and 1 cup in 16 minutes. After their time is up, let the grains sit covered in the microwave for a while—then season, salt and enjoy!

A variety of pasta dishes can also be cooked in the microwave. For example, to prepare a single-person serving of elbow macaroni, place 1 cup of water in a large bowl. Heat this water for around three minutes on high until it boils. Add salt, vegetable oil, and 2 ounces of macaroni, spreading the macaroni around in the pot. Cook for 12 minutes on a lower setting until the water is absorbed. Combined with a pre-made pasta sauce

and some cheese, this makes a delicious alternative to expensive takeout.

Perhaps the perennial favorite of microwave chefs is baked potatoes, both regular and sweet. These energy-dense root vegetables can then be mixed with cottage cheese, ketchup, pasta sauce, or shredded cheese for a quick lunch. Start by washing the potato thoroughly and poking it several times with a fork. Place it on a microwave safe dish in and cook on high for 4-5 minutes until, turning and then cooking again until soft.

Of course, no meal is complete without a healthy dose of vegetables. Proponents of microwave cooking claim that the faster method preserves more vitamins because less water is used, and water can leech vitamins out of the vegetables. Any assortment of fresh or frozen vegetables can be used—carrots, green beans, broccoli, cauliflower, and spinach are the usual favorites. Peel and prepare the vegetables, slicing them into equal sizes. Place them in a microwave safe bowl with a few spoonfuls of water and cover the bowl. Cook on high for 5-10 minutes until they are tender.

Ambitious microwave cooks

can even foray into desserts such as fruit crisps or Duncan Hines brownies. For fruit crisps, place sliced and peeled fruits in a large microwave safe dish with some sugar and lemon juice. Microwave on high for 5 minutes, while mixing together brown sugar, quick-cooking oats, melted butter, and cinnamon to make a crumbly mixture. Spread the mixture over the fruits and continue microwaving until the fruits are tender and the topping is bubble.

To make a cake mix, just mix together the indicated ingredients—including the eggs—and pour the prepared mix into a large microwave safe bowl. Microwave on high for 8 minutes, then remove and set aside for another 10 minutes to allow it to finish cooking. The cake can then be flipped onto a paper plate and frosted with ready-made frosting—just in time for that forgotten roommate's birthday.

With a little practice, even the most inexperienced cook can become adept at using the microwave to make quick snacks and meals to fuel movie marathons and all-nighters.

### International Year of Chemistry Begins On and Off Campus

Avigail Soloveichik

January 1, 2011 marked the beginning of a new solar year, a year dedicated to celebrating chemistry. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2011 is officially the International Year of Chemistry (IYC). IYC had its opening ceremony in Paris on January 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> and was officially initiated in the United States on February 1<sup>st</sup>. According to the official IYC-2011 website, the International Year of Chemistry "is a worldwide celebration of the achievements of chemistry and its contributions to the well-being of humankind."

Since 1959, UNESCO has established an "international year" every several years to pay tribute to a specific subject, cause, or population. Examples include International Literacy Year (1990), International Anti-Apartheid Year (1978/79), International Tourist Year (1967), and International Year for Disabled Persons (1981). Several years have had multiple designations. The year 2011, for example, is set aside not only for Chemistry, but also for Forests, Youth, and People of African Descent.

Chemistry was first proposed as a topic at an Executive Committee meeting of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), an organization perhaps most well-known for its influence

on chemical nomenclature. IUPAC submitted an IYC proposal to the UN in April 2008 and conceived a multinational initiative to support the plan. A few months later, UNESCO pronounced 2011 the International Year of Chemistry.

The slogan of the International Year of Chemistry is "Chemistry—our life, our future." IYC is planned to center around four themes, which are listed on the official IYC website: "[to] Increase the public appreciation and understanding of chemistry...Encourage the interest of young people in chemistry...Generate enthusiasm for the creative future of chemistry...[and] Celebrate the role of women in chemistry or major historical events in chemistry." This last goal stems from the fact that 2011 is the centennial of Madame Curie's winning the Nobel Prize and of the founding of the International Association of Chemical Societies.

The official IYC team and its affiliates throughout the world have organized many exciting events for the year. They also encourage local institutions and individuals to share ideas via the IYC website.

In fact, celebration in the spirit of the International Year of Chemistry has already begun right here on campus. The Yeshiva University Chemistry Clubs are actively demonstrating that chemistry is important and fun for everyone, not

just for students majoring in the subject. In addition, one particular focus of the clubs is to promote interest in chemistry among young students. Project START Science! and FUTURE, two science education programs recently instituted by the Yeshiva College Chemistry Club, are prime examples. Similarly, the Stern College Chemistry Club is currently organizing a community interaction project on the topic of chemistry and color.

"Project START (Students, Teachers, and Researchers Teach) Science! is a new initiative in which students from Yeshiva College and Stern College, accompanied by professors from Yeshiva University, design and implement scientific modules in a local public school," explains Ari Cuperfain, President of the YC Chemistry Club. Four groups of YU students will each teach two lessons to the P.S. 366 fifth grade class; in total, 34 YU students will give eight lessons in chemistry, physics, biology, and engineering. "We hope Project START Science! will allow YU students to provide the students of P.S. 366 with a fun, meaningful, and educational window into the exciting world of science," says Yair Saperstein, the project manager.

FUTURE is a science education program that the University of Michigan IDEA Institute introduced three years ago. The program is a

collaborative effort between college students and professors and the teachers and students at local urban high schools. Small groups of Yeshiva College and Stern College students are paired with a high school biology, chemistry, or physics teacher at Gregorio Luperon High School for Science and Mathematics; the undergraduate students will assist the teachers by preparing learning activities. As per the program's flexible nature, these activities can range from field trips to lesson plans to demonstrations, and are chosen based on what best suits the specific subject and class.

In September 2010, the American Chemical Society (ACS) awarded the Stern College Chemistry Club a Community Interaction Grant to present a project on chemistry and color at a local elementary school. The club will implement its program at P.S. 134 Henrietta Szold School, an elementary school on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The two-part program will extend over two Fridays. On the first Friday, club members will use demonstrations, such as an oscillating clock reaction and a disappearing ink display, to explain how chemistry and color are related. On the second Friday, the club will strengthen the chemistry lesson by engaging the students in a hands-on tie-dyeing activity.

These programs promise to be

educational and entertaining for everyone involved. In addition, the Yeshiva College and Stern College Chemistry Clubs are organizing other interesting chemistry events for the spring. Examples include a chemistry magic show; a chemistry mural activity; field trips to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Citromax Flavors; and lectures on green chemistry, color vision, and renewable energy.

These plans augur a year full of chemistry celebration. All in all, 2011 promises to be an exciting international year. Certainly, some of the "international years" may seem a bit random or even humorous, such as the International Year of the Potato (2008). There is something nice, however, at the heart of the idea to honor specific causes and subjects. Hence, if given the opportunity to designate a year special to your subject, why pass it up? Let the chemistry education and celebration begin!

To learn more about the International Year of Chemistry, visit [www.chemistry2011.org](http://www.chemistry2011.org). For more information about the Yeshiva University Chemistry Clubs, visit their websites at [www.yu.acs.wordpress.com](http://www.yu.acs.wordpress.com) and [www.scwchemclub.weebly.com](http://www.scwchemclub.weebly.com).



## SCIENCE AND HEALTH

### Attacking Acne Head-On

Melanie Sklaire

As residents of New York City, students at Stern endure a combination of cold climate, close living quarters, and environmental pollution. Inevitably, a host of dermatological problems arise from these conditions, including acne.

Adult acne, one of the most common skin problems, is caused by the same culprits that cause acne in teenagers: excess skin oil (sebum) and bacteria. Acne occurs when tiny holes on the surface of the skin, called pores, become clogged. Each pore is an opening to a canal called a follicle, which contains a hair and an oil gland. Normally, these oil glands help keep the skin moisturized and wash away old skin cells. However, when the glands produce too much oil, the pores can become blocked, accumulating dirt, debris, and bacteria. This blockage is what causes acne breakouts.

When breakouts are open at the skin's surface, they are called blackheads because of the dark appearance of the plugs in the hair follicles. When they are closed, whiteheads occur in the form of slightly raised, skin-colored bumps. Cysts, or pus-filled lumps beneath the surface of the skin, tend to be painful and can cause scars.

While acne is a condition that is often frustratingly hard to get rid of, there is no need to lose hope. Many different options exist to treat acne, and in combination they can be quite effective. For example, birth control pills may help some women control acne, since the hormones in the pills can help block oil-producing hormones.

Since not all acne is caused by fluctuating hormones, but rather the growth of the bacterial species *P. acnes*, dermatologists may prescribe antibiotics as a short-term, effective treatment. These antibiotics, including minocycline, doxycycline, and tetracycline, work from the inside-out to mainly prevent the appearance of large, deep red cysts. In conjunction with antibiotics, topical treatments can work to completely eradicate acne. Dermatologists may treat tough acne with a laser procedure called photodynamic therapy.

Unusually stubborn cases of acne may be treated by Accutane, or isotretinoin, a drug that works to slow the production of pimple-forming compounds. Taken twice a day with pill, Accutane can often provide relieved patients with a creamy, healthy glow. However, Accutane is accompanied with a litany of warnings, as it can pro-

duce unusually dry, cracked skin, headaches, mood changes, and other noxious side effects.

Additionally, many effective over-the-counter treatments can help acne sufferers to prevent ongoing breakouts. Washing one's face no more than twice a day, using a mild cleanser and warm water, is the most effective, since washing too much can irritate the skin. For the occasional breakout, treatments and washes containing benzoyl peroxide, sulfur, or salicylic acid may help, although in a small percentage of users they irritate the skin.

Lastly, anything that one applies to the face has the potential to clog pores, so consumers should look for oil-free and non-comedogenic makeup, sunscreens, and other skin products.

The good news is that acne does seem to go away with age. For most people, acne diminishes over time and tends to disappear — or at the very least decrease — after one reaches one's early twenties. Although there is no way to predict how long it will take to disappear entirely, if one takes adequate steps for prevention, they can rest assured that their fears of life-long acne will be washed away to reveal a fresh face for tomorrow.

### Science Book Short

### Nature and Nurture Team Up for a Note-Worthy Read

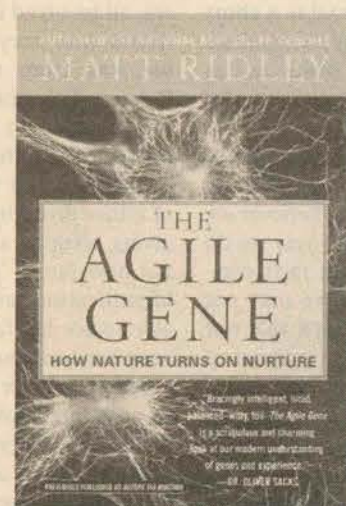
Helen Ayala Unger

"Similarity," begins this month's science pick, "is the shadow of difference." *The Agile Gene* by Matt Ridley is claimed by the author to be a chronicle of the century-long debate over whether human nature is controlled by biological nature or ingrained nurture. After finishing it, however, readers will not only find themselves educated in biology and psychology, but will have become more aware of the human condition itself. Ridley manages to bridge the gap between nativism and behavioralism in a book that is concisely written and eloquently balanced, providing a literary treat for the scientifically inclined.

*The Agile Gene* starts with a detailed outline of the history and science behind the nature-versus-nurture debate, giving a myriad of examples in support of both arguments. The technological advances made throughout the years are highlighted, and the author explains every scientific concept in clear, accessible

terms. Ridley does a remarkable job of remaining unbiased in his account by avoiding assumption and allows the reader to form an independent opinion. Towards the end of the book, the focus shifts towards genetic engineering and the role of politics in the debate which, according to the author, has become the nature-via-nurture debate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ridley ends the discussion with a definitive, Nietzsche-esque statement: "Nature versus nurture is dead."

Simply put, this book is a great read. Ridley's clear writing style abridges even the most complex experiments without losing an iota of information. Just as the book balances the two scientific views it explains, it also strikes a balance between organized fact and entertaining prose. *The Agile Gene* offers its readers a chance to grow in their perception of genes and experience, and does so in a well-worded way that is hard to put down.



HarperCollins Publishers

### Nutrition Nook: A Surprising Way to Stave Off the Munchies!

Shayna Abramson

Did you know that you can reduce your appetite simply by sipping a glass of water?

Talk about an easy diet. A recent study done at Virginia Tech found that by drinking two 8-ounce glasses of water before each meal, test subjects shed significant amounts of weight in short amounts of time. The subjects in the study drank water 15-30 minutes before eating their meal; interestingly, this appetite-squelching technique was especially effective amongst young women. To try it for yourself, drink 16 oz. of water about 10 minutes before you consume a meal or an afternoon snack.

Now, you might think, this sounds great but does it actually work? Simply put, yes! Drinking before a meal can help you lose weight because water takes up room in the stomach and makes

you feel full, causing you to actually consume less food. Subjects in the study who drank water before their meal lost 5 pounds more over the course of 3 months than subjects who didn't drink. Those who drank water consumed a significantly lower number of calories at meals but still felt satiated.

Often, the feeling of hunger is confused with thirst. Taking a drink of water instead of reaching for a snack can kill your cravings for food and ensure that you consume fewer calories. This could save you hundreds of calories a day!

Other benefits of drinking lots of H<sub>2</sub>O include helping your skin stay breakout-free by flushing out excess salt and toxins from your body, and keeping you from feeling bloated. In short, stay hydrated to feel your best.

### Feeling funny?



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Write for the Purim Observer.

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## ISRAEL

## Encounter

Sophie Felder

I imagine that many of us maintain some type of connection to the land of Israel. We may have family there, we may feel a spiritual affinity for the Holy Land, or the draw may be cultural. Perhaps it's the place we can convince our parents to send us to for a fun vacation. The trip to Israel is a short one, easily justified by its religious significance, which many of us embark on even multiple times per year.

Because the country is home to many valuable things, we are easy patrons of Israel. But whenever we engage with a place the way we do with Israel, we express tacit consent for many things we may not be aware of. While I think that our visits to Israel and our support of its economy are imperative, I also believe that we need to make the effort to become educated patrons of Israel.

In general, an educated patron has a well-rounded perspective on the product that he engages with. He looks at the pros and cons of the item and bases conclusions on a knowledgeable understanding of the object. It is a process that leads to the appreciation of the product and reassures the patron that he has made an educated choice.

So too, an educated patron of Israel should be aware of various facets of the country that, although he may know exist, he has either chosen to ignore or not honestly paid attention to in his assessment of Israel. Our perspective of Israel is often rosy, adorned with spirituality and the glimmer of idealism. I would never want to dim these idealistic views; on the contrary, I think it is possible to come to an even higher level of appreciation for Israel by looking at the land without rose-tinted glasses. I would like to focus on one story in particular which opened my eyes to the idea that Israel is not perfect.

My first step on a journey bent on becoming an educated patron of Israel was taken in Bethlehem. I participated in a two-day trip called Encounter that sends participants to listen to the Palestinians who literally lived down the road from my *midrasha* (seminary) in *Migdal Oz*.

Choosing to go and listen to people that I knew might not have such pleasant things to say about the place I call home was one of the most difficult decisions of my life. Nevertheless, I did it. I did it not merely to satisfy my personal curiosity of what lay behind the wall, but so that I could say I had made an effort to step out of my ivory tower.

I was so nervous. I didn't want to be told that my brother in the Israeli army really was the aggressor. I didn't want people to try to convince me that Israel had taken land from anybody. Israel is a

country that I love and respect and I didn't want to doubt that. It turns out, however, that hearing some very difficult things about Israel made me love and respect it even more.

We heard from a variety of panelists as well as individual speakers, all involved in non-violent activism. One story that really struck me was from a woman named Rula, a Palestinian woman who was married to a Jordanian. Her husband was then deported, and Rula was faced with the decision of either divorcing her husband or giving birth to a child who would not have Israeli-issued Palestinian identification, and would be unable to see her family. She has not seen her husband in fifteen years.

Rula has since dedicated her life to assisting divorced women in a community where marriage is paramount. Rula acknowledges her situation as one that was clearly not malicious, as no one deliberately wanted her to get divorced, but Israeli bureaucracy mandated a divorce in order for her child to become an Israeli citizen and so that she could stay in the same place as her family.

Rula's story stayed with me. It was almost benign compared to some of the other narratives we heard, but her message still resounded. Here was an individual who had suffered, made decisions I would never have wanted to make in a community that often blames Israel, and yet she was willing to speak to me. Not only that, but she was willing to forgive Israel and not blame Israelis. For Rula, complaining would be unproductive, and pointing fingers would get her nowhere, so she forgave and began addressing the issues at hand through the medium of politics and social justice.

Many Israelis have suffered in the conflict, and we who love Israel have felt the pain along with them. I vividly remember the second intifada, the capture of Gilad Shalit, and the political and terrorist attacks against Israel, all events that have had a tremendous impact on me. I am sure many of us have friends or relatives who have been affected by the conflict.

However, perhaps Rula, an individual who has also suffered unjustly, has something to teach us. Rula chose not to remain entrenched in blame and anger; instead she looked up and out toward the wide expanse of the future and the hope that her situation and the situations of those around her might change. Let her be an inspiration for us and Israelis who have also suffered, that we too might look beyond the hurt and anger toward a place of improvement and understanding.

Being able to forgo blame starts by being able and willing to listen. It may not always be comfortable

## Israeli Apartheid Week Take 7

Lauren Burstein

This March marks the seventh annual Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW), which will be taking place in over 40 cities worldwide. According to the official IAW website, [apartheidweek.org](http://apartheidweek.org), the main goal of IAW is, "to educate people about the nature of Israel as an apartheid system and to build Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns as part of a growing global BDS movement."

Over the span of an entire week, disparate movements in cities and college campuses around the world will join together to recognize Israel as an Apartheid state. They will encourage boycotts of Israeli products as they present power-points, host poetry slams, lead informative sessions, and rally protests in order to both inform the public of their beliefs and persuade others to rectify what they believe to be a dire situation.

Last year, as part of IAW, students from New York University and Columbia University united on their respective campuses to advocate for the Palestinian people living in Gaza. Students participating in the demonstrations advocated for the three main requests that are part of the BDS movement. The first is for the dismantling of the security wall that runs alongside the west bank. The second is for the granting of fully equal rights to all Palestinian citizens. The third is to grant Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes in

Israel.

One of the main problems that pro-Israel groups on both campuses face when confronted with these demonstrations is the lack of communication that takes place between their groups and their counterparts. Rebecca Srulowitz, a junior at Barnard College and co-president of the *Garin Lavi*, one of the student pro-Israel groups that comprise the Columbia/Barnard Hillel committees, expresses her ongoing frustrations with trying to communicate with groups that support IAW. "There is a group on campus, Students for Justice in Palestine, that is the main organizer of events such as Apartheid Week and the creation of a mock checkpoint in the middle of the main college thoroughfare," explains Srulowitz. "Their stated mission is 'anti-normalization,' which blatantly means that they do not seek to engage in any sort of dialogue with pro-Israel groups on campus."

Srulowitz notes that this year, *Garin Lavi* changed its methods this year in an attempt to encourage communication between the two sides. She explains that "to combat one of their Israel smear campaigns as well as to show how absurdly disproportionate their events are, we created posters and leaflets printed with the slogan, 'It's complicated; let's talk about it.'"

While pro-Israel students at

college campuses that have large anti-Israel groups are looking for ways to advocate for Israel in the coming weeks, students at Yeshiva University (YU) are also preparing to combat general anti-Israel sentiments. Aviah Saltzman, a senior at Stern College for Women and co-president of the Israel club, states that the Israel club plans to respond to IAW "through many means such as Israel Advocacy training, a mock security wall to show YU students what students at other colleges face, as well as sending groups of YU students to these colleges to help represent the Jews and their peaceful ways in opposition to what the IAW presents to their audiences." Even though YU students are not directly exposed to IAW sentiments on campus, it is still imperative for them to learn how to respond to such sentiments.

The David Project, an organization that seeks to teach students how to advocate for Israel, has created a curriculum that is meant to address students responding to events such as IAW. Many YU students are familiar with this curriculum and have studied these strategies under The David Project's pedagogy. Students who wish to seek more information about IAW can visit [apartheidweek.org](http://apartheidweek.org). Students are also encouraged to visit [thedavidproject.org](http://thedavidproject.org) for more information on Pro-Israel advocacy.

## The Israel Club's Busy Semester

Lauren Burstein

The Israel club at Yeshiva University (YU) has been back at full speed since the start of the spring semester. In the few weeks since the end of winter vacation, they have hosted a slew of fascinating events that have caught the eyes of many undergraduate YU Students. And Aviah Saltzman, a senior at Stern College for Women and co-president of the Israel club, explains that there are many more events to look out for in the weeks to come.

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, the Israel club hosted a lecture given by Yishai Fleischer, well-known lecturer and director of Kumah, an organization that promotes the continued flourishing of Israel. Fleischer's lecture was entitled, "Eye on Zionism," and he spoke to students about the issues of *Halacha* (Jew-

ish Law) and Democracy in Israel. Additionally, the Israel club hosted a *Tu B'Shvat* (Jewish Earth Day) celebration, a lecture with Professor Shlomo Aronson about David Ben Gurion, *Nefesh B'Nefesh alyiah* interviews, and an Israel Advocacy training event lead by David Olesker.

For the remainder of the semester, the Israel club has plenty of events planned, including an Israel fair for Purim, responses to Israeli Apartheid Week, a five kilometer run to raise money for organizations in Israel, and many events pertaining to both *Yom Hazikaron* (Israeli Memorial Day) and *Yom Haa'tzmaut* (Israeli Independence Day) that will be taking place in May.

Saltzman explains that part of the reason why the Israel club has been particularly active on campus this year is because the club has been divided into four subgroups. The first group is called *Yakum*. Saltzman explains that *Yakum*, "is geared towards providing students with the ability to stand up against anti-Zionism or anti-Semitism and to make the student body more aware of what is going on in the world in terms

of these prejudices." *Yakum* hosts events such as the Israel advocacy training session.

The second group is called the *Garin*, and its purpose is to help students on campus with aliyah planning "whether it be talking about issues concerning aliyah, meeting an aliyah representative, learning Hebrew, or networking to secure a job," notes Saltzman.

The third group is called Communities. Saltzman makes clear that the purpose of Communities is to help bridge students to communities in Israel through "fundraising, learning about a community, or speaking with people from specific communities in Israel."

The last group is the Politics/History/Culture group, which emphasizes the importance of studying Israeli history and being informed about Israeli life and culture. Saltzman notes that the Israel club accomplishes this by "hosting programming such as speakers, films, and social events."

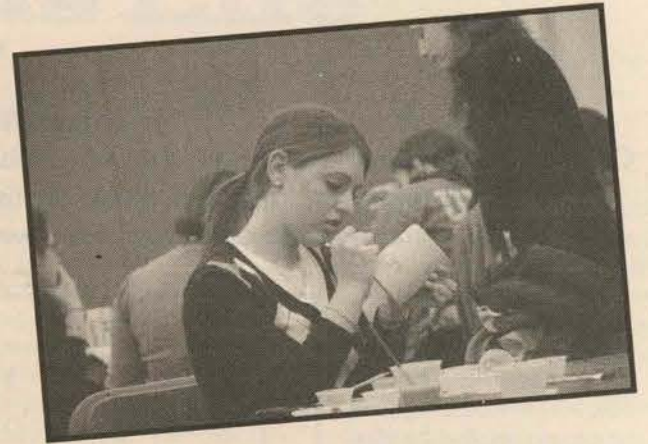
With their continued efforts to allow a Zionist outlet for students on campus, the Israel club remains true to what Saltzman refers to as their ultimate goal: "to



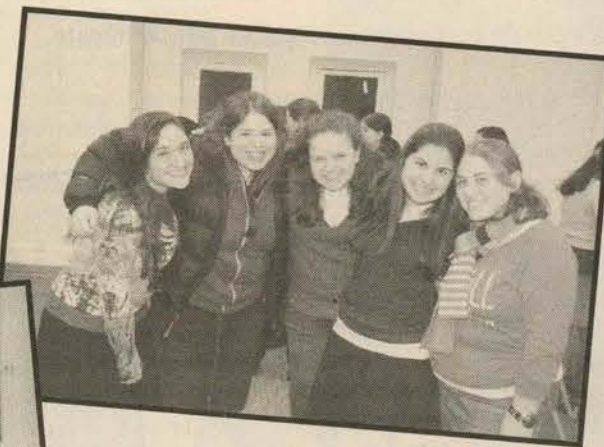
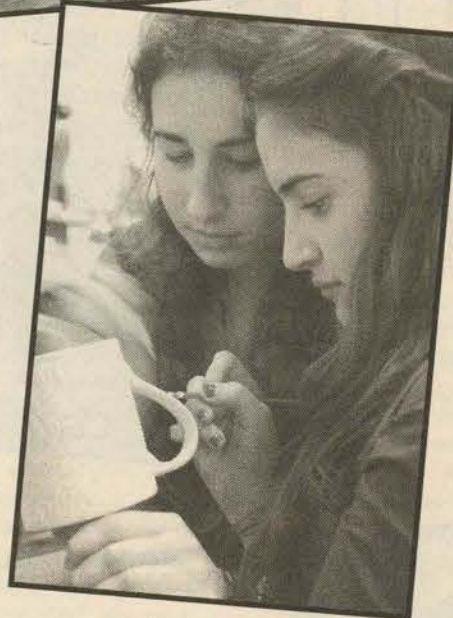
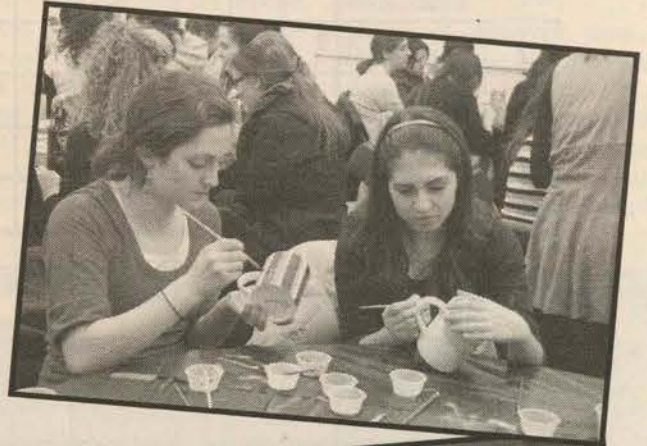
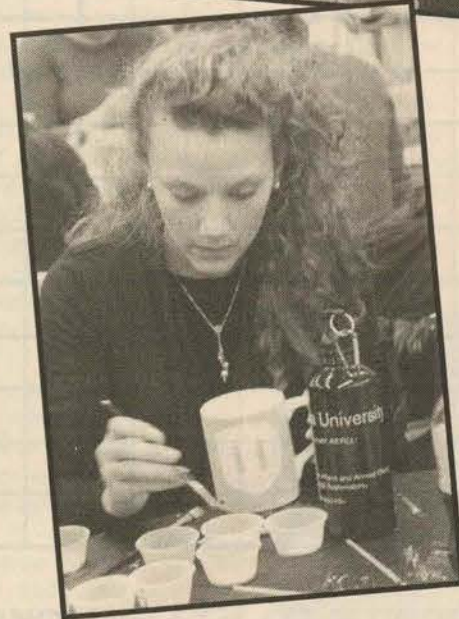
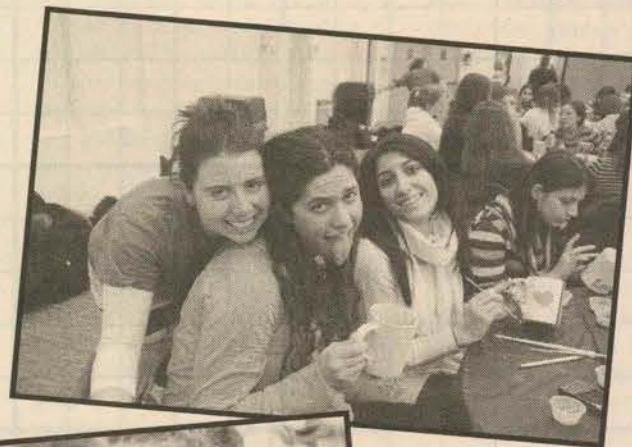




# STUDENT SNAPSHOTS



## WELCOME BACK POTTERY



Student Snapshots photos by  
Julia Siegel

Seeing double?

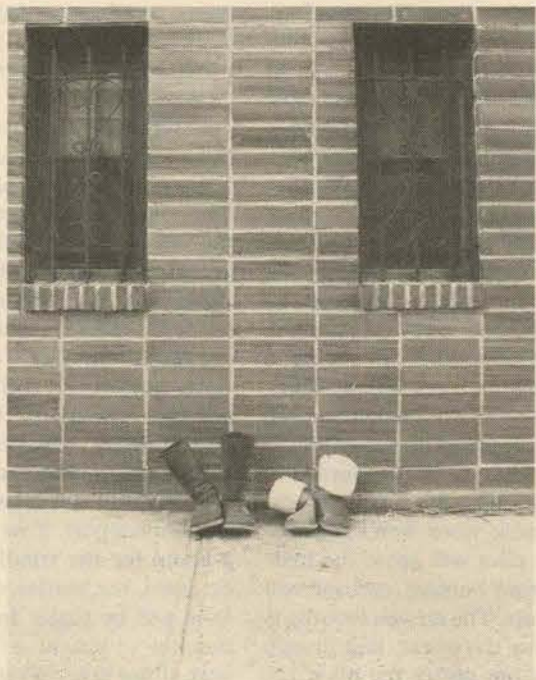


STYLE

U-G-G-L-Y

Abbie Wasserman

We are all guilty of it. Yet time and time again, we end up stuck in a pile of slush with nothing but wet sheepskin to keep our tootsies warm. The best heaters in New York City can't dry them fast enough, it's one of the saddest things seen in the midst of winter, and they are definitely not fashionable. However, whether the forecast predicts rain, shine, or snow, Stern College for Women (SCW) students do nothing but trust their Uggs.



Friends in dry weather...

stain each boot unapologetically. And that chocolate brown color that they are loved for in the store turns into black after a storm. It is time to wake up and see that your feet deserve better!

If you are wondering "how will I live without that luscious warm fur?" or "why must I be bound to unflattering round toes and unshaped boot-legs?", the answer is in every window on 34th Street. But before you hesitate about

leaving your warm, comfy, old Uggs behind, just remember how they didn't protect you when you chose them over the other ones. There is a place for Uggs, and Australia is NOT New York City!

Another student, Mollie Sharfman, can relate: "One time I put my Uggs on in the morning... and I felt like I was constantly walking in wet, drenched fur! My Uggs were worthless as soon as I stepped out into the snowy abyss." Mollie is not alone; scattered wet-and-soggy-salt-stained Uggs scamper around campus every winter day.

Although there is a cure, it hardly helps matters. The steps for cleaning Uggs according to eHow.com are to first to use cold water to lightly moisten the outside of the boots only- do not submerge them

Unfortunately, as the weather turns slushy, students keep thinking "Today I will keep dry! Today my toes won't stay numb! Today is the day that my Uggs will live up to their value and stay as comfortable and warm as they are in the warmer and drier season". Despite high hopes, Uggs do nothing but disappoint. It's time that we let go of our dream, and put our Uggs away for the winter. (At least into our huge tote bags as we trudge through the snow in something more practical.) The Ugg problem is especially apparent to SCW students, who live among the slushy streets in Midtown. Clean roads are few and far between, so students have to be prepared for the walk to class. Even though Uggs are bought for the winter season, this is exactly when customers begin to become unsatisfied with their purchase.

As one wet-footed SCW senior explains, "Wearing Uggs is like walking on pillows. A drop of heaven...until the rain and snow comes." Numerous students feel this way, but continue to sport the soggy shoes. The wet-stained Uggs fad will never change, even though they can never live up to the rain boot we want them to be! Everyday, that white crust is formed by the wet snow and dry salt and just continues to



... but foe in wet.

Joanna Ross-Tash

Aimee Rubenstein

You Are What You Wear

Fads change as often as the seasons do, but the one thing that is destined to stay the same during the change of seasons is the dress code at Stern College for Women (SCW). Even though winter brings modest sweaters and tights, it also brings the tights-and-tunic look- which is not the appropriate apparel to wear while strutting up and down the escalator in the Sy Syms School of Business. Although it may be tempting to slip into a sweater dress that barely hugs your thighs, don't do it. The rules are not new, but now that they have been publicized, dress code violators should watch their hemlines.

On January 19, 2011, Dean Karen Bacon sent out an email saying, "The Dress Code at the Beren Campus, in effect in the academic buildings at all times, requires students to wear knee length dresses/skirts and tops that have sleeves." In addition to serving as a sharp reminder, this email effectively debunked the myth that pants are only banned from Judaic classes.

The guidelines are clear, but the retribution is not. Dean Bacon explains that SCW is not interested in punishing immodestly dressed students. She says, "Women were becoming a little bit lax and caught up in the current fashion without thinking about what was appropriate for campus." Students have been spotted repeatedly wearing jeans, sweatpants and skirts that

are above the knee. Either they felt that the dress code was cramping their personal style or they were just oblivious to the rules.

Dress code regulations should not be a shocker to anyone, especially in a Jewish university. "Everything in life has a dress code," remarks Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC) President, Alana Himber. The controversy is whether these regulations will actually be followed or thrown into the back of the closet. Therefore, SCW found a student with a solution.

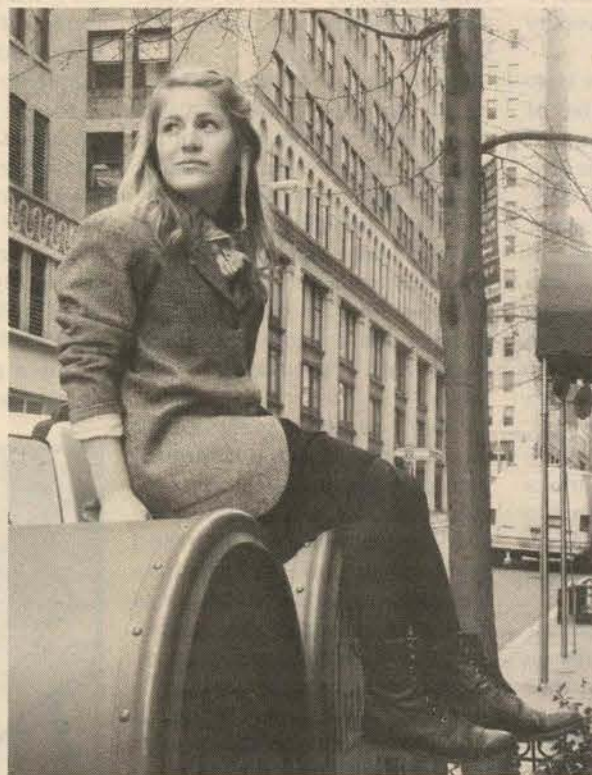
Briana Mizrahi is a keen student with a plan to begin what she calls "Simply Tznius." Her goal, Mizrahi says, is to "sell the name brand skirts at an affordable price so students can observe the orthodox dress code-in style." Mizrahi

plans to sell labels like Hard Tail, at ridiculously low prices because selling *tznius* (modest) clothing on campus "is bound to be successful" in promoting the dress code.

This would be a great solution to the too-short-too-tight-skirt wearers, but is the student body willing to wear skirts that cover their knees? Many students who cover their knees because of *halachic* reasons believe that the dress code reinforcement itself is inappropriate. An anonymous frumshaniista explains, "Tznius is a personal decision, and although I only wear skirts, I do not think someone should be forced to wear one."

While it is true that clothing choices are often tied to personal identity, even for those interested in dressing *tznius*, the fashion industry has been making it difficult to shop in mainstream stores for modest clothing. Whether women walk into H&M, ZARA or Gap, the only skirts that they will find will be above the knee. Although one would think that colder temperatures would promote longer hemlines, the opposite is true. Tights and leggings provide the canvas for itsy-bitsy-teeny-weeny skirts. However, even the fashion industry agrees that tights are definitely not pants!

Despite the fact that the dress code may seem new, sweatpants stragglers and tempting trouser-wearers were always seen as the conspicuous students. There is hope, though. Dean Bacon says, "I would like the students to like the way that they look." Her fashion advice is not to dress "frumpy or dumpy!"



Joanna Ross-Tash

Are Stern students worried about their fashion future?

in water. The rest of the steps involve high caliber chemistry and sponge baths with cleaner. To finish the process, you must "stuff boots with newspapers" and hide from direct sunlight or they will shrink! Also, you must brush them and add baking powder, corn flower, or sweet oils if you want them looking and feel-

ing their finest. Another option is following Ugg Australia's advice and buying more of their products, specifically the Ugg cleaning brush and kit. Perhaps there is a better solution than buying more Ugg-made items

It is not too late to buy alternative winter boots this season. Tretorn and Hunter have great selections of colors and styles that will keep you dry and warm. The most important tip: buy rubber soles that are waterproof. This way you won't have to worry about damaging your shoes or your reputation. Not only will your feet thank me later -- so will your Uggs, your wallet and your boyfriend.

The Observer wishes everyone luck on their upcoming midterms!



## OPINIONS

## “It’s a Bird, It’s a Plane...It’s Super Seniors!”

Jennie Kraut

*Four years.* Four years of dorming, four years of finals, four years of Midnight Madness. Four years at Yeshiva University. For an exclusive group of students, spending a fourth year on campus at YU allows them not only to spread their college careers out over four years, but also grants them the title of ‘Super Senior’. This allows these students to decrease the pressure that comes with the tremendous workload they get from balancing the dual curriculum reflected in YU’s motto of *Torah U’Madda*.

I am a Super Senior. While the name suggests that I should be wearing a cape getting ready to fly out of here, in fact it connotes the opposite. Daring to go against the majority, I have decided to hang up my cape for one more year and continue to soak up the wealth of resources that Yeshiva University has to offer.

But if being a Super Senior is so great, then why are there so few of us floating around on campus?

I was first introduced to the idea of being a ‘Super Senior’ at the Stern Open House I attended as a senior in high school. President Joel got up in front of a large group of high school students and their anxious parents and began to extol Stern and its accomplishments to the crowd. About half way through the session, he called some current Stern students up to the stage and asked them to answer various questions that he had prepared in order to give all of us in the audience a glimpse into Stern life from an insider’s perspective.

I distinctly remember him introducing two of the students on stage as ‘super seniors’ and then proceeding to ask each of them why they decided to stay an ‘extra’ year on campus. One student answered that she had switched her major half way through her college career and therefore needed the extra time to complete her requirements. “Fair enough,” I thought. The other one answered that she did not know what she wanted to do with her life (*gasp*), so she decided to stay at Stern for some extra time to figure out what she wanted to do.

I was appalled by her lack of indecisiveness, and it was clear that my mother echoed my sentiment when she turned to me and said “But that won’t be you, Jennie. You’ll never be a super senior, you’re a very goal-oriented person.” And I wholeheartedly agreed...at the time. Well, it looks like YU gets to have the last laugh on this one, because here I am, a Super Senior, writing this article based solely on my class status.

Reflecting back on the last six months of my life as a Super Senior, I can see with clarity that taking the opportunity to spend

an extra year at Stern was the right decision. I have come realize that taking the time to stay at YU for a fourth year is truly a luxury and I hope that more students take advantage of it.

College is a time to discover what kind of person you want to be and how you can use your strengths to give back to the world. It’s a time to cultivate your personality and discover what you are truly passionate about. So, for me, being a fourth year student has not been about being a ghost in the hallways of Stern and concentrating on getting out of this institution as fast as possible. On the contrary, I and my fellow Super Seniors are in a very powerful position. We know more about how our university works than any of the other students simply by virtue of the fact that we’ve been on campus the longest.

This is the year in our lives when we can finally get to head that student club we’ve been a part of for so long, when we can learn more about a subject that interests us and even minor in it - and when we finally have time to go see that Broadway show we’ve been meaning to see. It is an exciting opportunity to be a Super Senior and finally have some time for ourselves.

But I also have to be honest; there are times when it is difficult to be part of such a select group of individuals. After all, many of the good friends whom I met when I first set foot into Brookdale have moved on to a different stage of their lives, leaving me to linger behind in the familiar halls of Stern.

However, I think there are a couple of advantages to having those familiar faces fade from my everyday existence. First, it gave me the fantastic opportunity to meet my fellow lower classmen- you never know when you’ll bump into someone whose goals and dreams are so utterly similar to yours, you have to wonder how it is that you’ve never met them before. Secondly, this is the year when you can make it ‘cool’ to sit alone in the caf- so revel in it! Because the freshman, who is eyeing you with a look of utter confusion as to why you would commit such social suicide, eating your salad alone, may be secretly masking her admiration as she struggles to understand how she can feel as comfortable with herself as you do.

I think after weighing all the pros and cons of staying for a fourth year, the pros win, and all of the cons can be turned into pros. So, Super Seniors, before we get ready for takeoff and leave behind our familiar surroundings, let’s remove our capes - because this is our year to teach the rest of the student body how to fly!

## The Frindle for Dummies

Sophie Felder

Every parent knows that at some point they are going to have to sit down with their kids and have “the talk”. There just comes that special time when concepts that might be unfamiliar, uncomfortable, or even foreign need to become a real part of a child’s lexicon. So too, it has come time for us to have a “talk” about what we call “the environment.”

Especially after living in the Big Apple for so long, I barely know what a tree is anymore. Wildlife is unfamiliar, the thought of food coming from anywhere but the caf or Mendy’s (or Tiberias, for special occasions) is uncomfortable, and the chance that I would even consider where my Chobani yogurt container goes after I’m done with it is highly unlikely. Like a naïve child, it is hard for me to look ahead to future consequences. When my mother sits me down for one of her “talks,” she tries her best to make things accessible and may even change the language to make the topic at hand seem less intense. So I am going imitate her techniques in discussing the environment, mostly because “environment” has un-cool written all over it. From here on in, what was previously known as “the environment” will be called “frindle” - and thus let the “talk” begin.

On a personal level, it is hard to see the changes in the frindle.

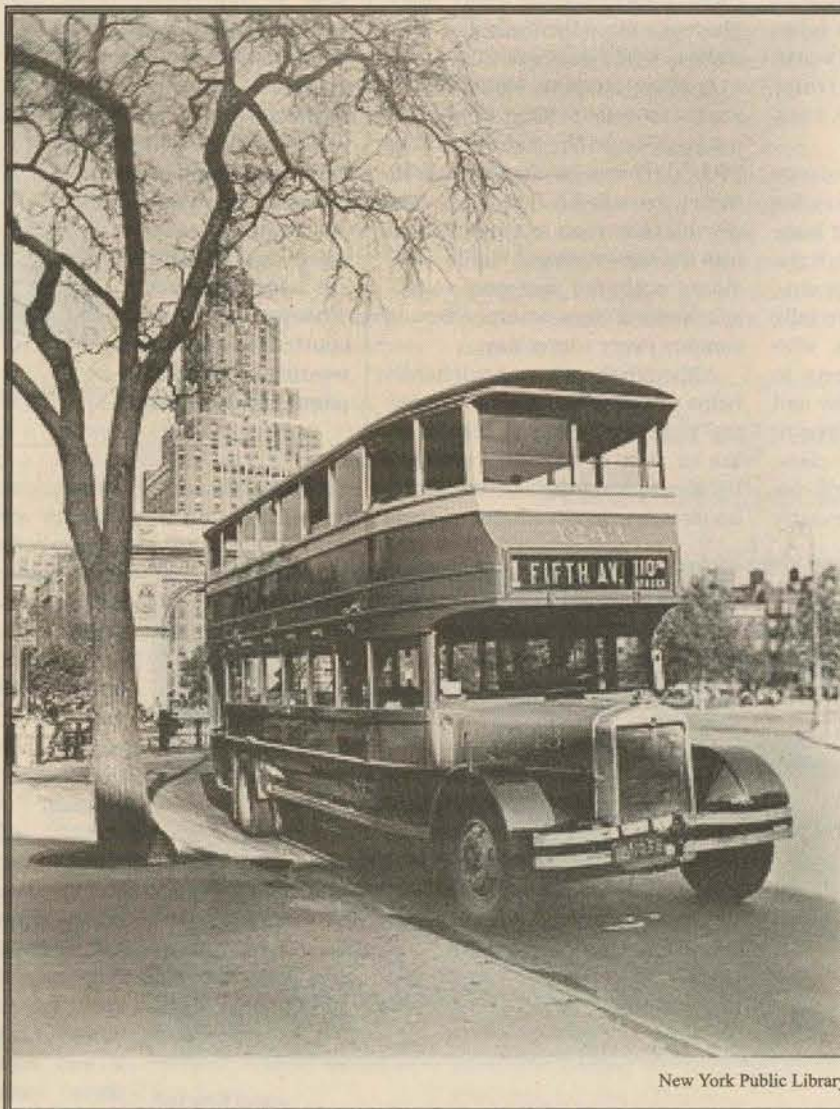
If you look at your immediate surroundings and then look again five minutes later - everything is the same. But collect a day’s worth of five minutes, turn those days into weeks, then weeks into years. Now, in those five “look around” minutes, you may have thrown your very own Chobani (and the spoon) into the trash. Turn that one Chobani into five every week, five into hundreds (because all your friends tossed out their containers too) then hundreds into thousands - that’s a whole lot of Chobani containers. Now it’s time for the foreign thought - where does all of that plastic go? The answer isn’t the garbage bin that stands beside the spinning cutlery dispenser; be a visionary and look beyond that.

In all likelihood, it will end up in a large pile in a landfill. Bulldozers and trucks will push it around, trying to compact the overflow. It might even be sent to an incinerator, and, unlike Buzz and Woody, your plastic ware won’t make it out. The piles will grow; the toxic fumes from burning garbage will accumulate. The air you breathe is altered for the worse, and though you may not notice the piles, the enormous amount of garbage we generate will be a harmful reality that your children will have to live with - unless we rethink the way we act.

I am of the strong opinion that

simple changes could dramatically alter the trajectory on which we are currently traveling. Though it is easier to use items like plastic cutlery and bottled drinks, doing so means participating in a system that is harmful to the frindle and is not sustainable. Eventually, we are going to run out of the resources we rely on. I don’t know many people who enjoy washing dishes, but I’m sure that all of us would express disinterest in living on a landfill.

Universities across the US have been leading initiatives to popularize a more sustainable lifestyle. Campuses like Stanford have made the switch from plastic to biodegradable products and many campuses have banned the sale of any bottled drinks. Instead, students are careful to drink from reusable water bottles and coffee mugs. At our own university, the Office of Sustainability has been working to live up to their title, but they cannot fulfill this mission without student support. If we do not take a stand for the frindle, the plastic stays, the bottles stay and our lives will be easier for five more minutes - but at a tremendous cost. If not now, when do we start to consider the ramifications of our actions and the carelessness with which we treat our planet? Make it cool to care- bring back the environment.



*In 1896 the Fifth Avenue Coach Company was founded following the demise of its predecessor, the Fifth Avenue Transportation Company. It originally ran horse-drawn omnibuses on Fifth Avenue. Only a couple years later they introduced electric buses and in 1907 began operating their own motor-buses. The company switched hands a few more times over the decades, and after a 1962 strike and difficulty with the financier, the city took over. At left is one of their buses photographed in Washington Square in 1936.*

New York Public Library



## OPINIONS

### Tefillah and Toboggans: Discussing Identity in Winnipeg, Canada

Kira Joel

Where can you find a place so cold that when a cup of boiling hot water is thrown in the air, the water freezes before it hits the ground? I found this phenomenon in a city called Winnipeg, located in Manitoba, Canada, which is just north of the American border, between North Dakota and Minnesota.

Thirteen college and post-college students, including myself, flew to the below-freezing temperatures of Winnipeg to be advisors on an annual Jewish identity retreat for the Gray Academy of Jewish Education, a community school that caters to a mostly-traditional Jewish community. For some of us, this was a return to a familiar retreat, while for others it was the start of a new adventure. The four days that I spent with a hundred high school students in a lodge in Winnipeg were some of the most invigorating and thought-provoking days of my year.

Every day of the retreat was packed with programs and sessions that encouraged the students to think about and discuss different facets of their personal and religious identities. As an advisor, I led discussion groups on topics ranging from belief in God and theodicy, to identity and freedom. Advisors also ran creative tefillah groups in the mornings, as an alternative to the traditional prayer service, in which they discussed the purpose of prayer and developing a personal relationship with G-d.

The purpose of the weekend was not to convince the students that certain religious opinions are the correct ones, but rather

to provide a safe environment in which important issues could be explored openly through discussion. Students were encouraged to share their views, as well as stories of relevant personal experiences. Participants, both students and advisors, were often respectfully challenged and forced to critically examine and reevaluate their previously held views.

Before arriving in Winnipeg, the advisors spent a great amount of time and effort putting together the various sessions. Simply preparing for these learning programs forced me to rethink my own views and lifestyle choices. While I grew up in an educational framework that encouraged questions, I have also always been in surroundings that rarely challenged my beliefs.

This self-exploratory process that began in the preparatory stages of the program continued and intensified during the retreat itself, as I spent the weekend in constant conversation with the students. The maturity with which the students approached philosophically complex issues, as well as their ability to articulate their thoughts clearly and intelligently, were astounding. Hearing these high school kids present and debate ideas and outlooks that I may have never considered before encouraged me to think more deeply about my own views.

In addition to the learning sessions, the retreat included various recreational activities, during which students and advisors could spend time together in a more relaxed atmosphere. Whether we were going down the huge to-

boggan ice slide outside, playing cards in the warmth of the lodge, or simply sitting around and talking, there was an environment of openness and fun.

The students were able to see that these Modern Orthodox Jews who came to spend the weekend with them are serious about religious matters and also enjoy having fun. In four short days, the advisors became role models that the students felt they could relate to and talk openly with about their struggles, challenges, and aspirations.

With the exposure they gained to new ideas regarding their personal and religious lives, the students hopefully left the retreat with an enhanced sense of Jewish identity.

I hope that the students gained both a sense that being Jewish means they belong to a greater community, and an understanding that they have the ability to make an impact on the world - an ability that comes with a lot of responsibility.

Certainly this experience has had a profound impact on my own personal and religious development. I would encourage other Stern students to consider being involved in similar programs, to challenge themselves and grapple with personal and religious beliefs while helping others along the same journey. Although we spent the weekend in frigid Winnipeg, the warmth and openness found on this program made us forget the freezing temperatures outside.

### "We reach out to you, Oh Youth, With a Brotherly Hand": Bnei Akiva, A Lifestyle

Miriam Seidman

Only because Bnei Akiva is such a monumental part of my life do I have to remind myself to calm down and not yell when people ask me, "What's Bnei Akiva?"

Bnei Akiva, a religious Zionist youth movement, has branches, or "Snifim", all around the world, from Moscow to LA, London to Perth, and everywhere in between. The educational philosophy of Bnei Akiva is to educate Jewish youth about Israel, Zionism and Am Yisroel, and help them develop a love and appreciation for Israel and Torah through both formal and informal education. Bnei Akiva runs programming for grade school children to young adults, ranging from bi-weekly programming to summer camps.

This past winter break I attended the Bnei Akiva World Veida, or the worldwide assembly of Bnei Akiva members, which takes place once every four years in Israel. This group of members from around the world meets with the intent to discuss, create, amend, and vote on new educational and ideological philosophies, programming, and other changes to Bnei Akiva in order to improve the movement. I, along with a group of five college and post-college students who are involved with Bnei Akiva, went to Amsterdam before the World Veida to spend Shabbat with the counselors of the Amsterdam branch of Bnei Akiva.

Our weekend started by meeting the shaliach, David, who was delighted that we were able to come and spend Shabbat with his snif. Bnei Akiva Amsterdam owns its own "house," where Shabbat activities, special events, shabbatonim, and other Bnei Akiva related activities take place. Because Bnei Akiva owns this property, the campers and counselors have the unique opportunity to decorate, set up, and run the house as they see fit. Beit Bnei Akiva Amsterdam has become the hangout for the local Jewish kids and as a result, their lives inevitably revolve around the values of Torah and Eretz Yisrael.

About twenty-five high school age counselors joined us for the weekend. Friday night was filled with singing, dancing, Divrei Torah, games, and leadership training activities. Throughout the evening, we, the American contingent, were bombarded by questions about life in America and our Bnei Akiva experience. Likewise, we asked the kids as many questions as we could about life in Amsterdam, their Bnei Akiva, and the Jewish community as a whole. What we discovered and learned

from those kids was not what we had expected to gain.

Although European Bnei Akiva stands for the same ideals of love of Torah and Eretz Yisrael as Bnei Akiva North America, its clientele is very different. While North American Bnei Akiva participants, or chanichim, mostly come from Modern Orthodox homes, many kids in European Bnei Akiva come from non-observant backgrounds, and as a result the snif's practices are very different than what would be expected in a North American snif. For example, a common problem in the Amsterdam snif is chanichim bringing cell phones to Bnei Akiva programs on Shabbat, which is almost unheard of in North America. Additionally, the Amsterdam snif sang different songs at their meals and at the Friday night Tisch, to the extent that when the American contingent tried to introduce fast songs at the Tisch, as is the custom in North American Bnei Akiva, the kids became very confused and even a bit upset.

At the start of our weekend, it seemed as if the snif in Amsterdam was literally and figuratively thousands of miles away. But as we became closer with the kids, we realized that despite our differences, we still stood for the same values and were a part of the same worldwide movement. I was truly inspired by the realization that my goals and passions for Bnei Akiva are not only applicable to North American Bnei Akiva; rather they extend farther than I could have ever imagined.

For me, Bnei Akiva yields members who, despite their bold differences, are able to act as one cohesive unit. We can still find common ground in our love of Torat Yisrael and Am Yisrael. Across the world, everyone in Bnei Akiva wears the same uniform, the tilboshet, sings the same anthem, Yad Achim, and, most importantly, believes in the same ideals of "Am Yisrael, b'erez Yisrael, al pi Torat Yisrael" - "The nation of Israel, in the land of Israel, according to the Torah of Israel."

Yet, Bnei Akiva's values and proactive approach to teaching Zionism are not reserved only for the people who attend - a Moshava camp or snif. Rather, I encourage anyone who believes in these ideals to reach out to their community or any place where they may find themselves, and educate people about Zionism and Torah, and the goal of building a rich and prosperous homeland for the Jewish people in the State of Israel.

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