



The Yeshiva University

# OBSERVER

VOLUME LVI, ISSUE IX MAY 24, 2010/20 IYAR 5771

## 2011 Senior Dinner Draws Greatest Attendance Yet

Tamara Freiden

On Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 300 seniors gathered at Abigail's on Broadway to end their memorable Yeshiva University experience at the annual Senior Dinner. With the elegant ambiance provided by the restaurant and mandated chic black and white attire, the dinner proved to be a night to remember. The entertainment, featuring Glozell Green, comedian and YouTube sensation, only added to the festive atmosphere. Additionally, the first 200 students to RSVP received a free giveaway of Snuggies imprinted with YU's logo to take along with them wherever their post-college plans may take them.

Months of preparation by both the SCW and YC Senior Class Boards preceded the event. While in previous years the dinner has been hosted at venues like the Wax Museum, budget cuts prevented such lavish options. However, after continuously rallying their Student Councils, Senior Class presidents Ariella Lipetz and Or Pikary were able to raise enough funds to raise

the cap from 125 students being able to attend to the maximum of 300. Even so, there was a considerable waiting list. "Seats were so in demand that one student reportedly traded his new Maccabeats CD for his friend's spot at the dinner," says Nachi Engelhardt, Senior Class Vice-President. The generous funds did allow the students to pay only five dollars for a three course steak dinner, entertainment, and giveaways.

"After all the months and months of countless hours of behind the scenes planning, emails, phone calls, meetings, and negotiations, it was delightful to see how well everything turned out," says Suzanne Mazel, Senior Class Treasurer. "The real focus at the dinner was ensuring that as many students as possible could attend, since everything is ultimately done for their benefit. Thankfully, the student councils, administration - especially Dean Braun - and the staff at Abigail's were so willing to sponsor and allow our original

numbers to more than double."

Due to a regrettable miscommunication, the Senior Dinner overlapped with the annual Athletics Dinner and Award Ceremony. Despite this unfortunate conflict, the flexibility of Mr. Joe Bednarsch and the entire Athletics staff in ensuring all seniors could be accommodated was sincerely appreciated by all. Transportation was provided immediately following the Athletics Dinner so that the athletes made it in time for a significant part of the dinner.

Upon arrival and check-in at the door, the night began with a mocktail hour meant for socializing with fellow peers as waves of



Julia Siegel

Glozell charmed YU seniors over steak and mocktails at Abigail's on Broadway.

students shuffled in. Glozell then arrived with her manager, mother, and sister for a meet-and-greet before her routine, and to take pictures with her avid fans. Her comedic routine centered around

good old Jewish humor and what she is more universally known for on YouTube: poking fun at musical artists and their songs. An especially appreciated line was one that

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## Happy Birthday to Our Homeland: Israel's Independence Day 2011/5771

Elana Goldberg

Yeshiva University students welcomed Israel's 63<sup>rd</sup> birthday in style, with a 2-day extravaganza that began Monday night May 9<sup>th</sup> and extended into an all-day celebration on Tuesday, May 10<sup>th</sup>. The festivities marked the 63<sup>rd</sup> year since the creation of the state of Israel and the establishment of the Jewish homeland.

Before the Yom Ha'atzmaut festivities began, YU students commemorated Yom HaZikaron, Israel's national day of remembrance for fallen soldiers and ci-

vilians. The *tekes* (ceremony) was sponsored by YU's various student councils in memoriam of fallen and captive members of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), as well as civilians who have given their lives for Israel since its founding in 1948. The *tekes* began with a candle-lighting ceremony, with YU students who had formerly served in the IDF or *sheirut leumi* (national service) lighting candles in honor of deceased soldiers and civilians. The candle lighting was followed by a recitation of the

mourning prayer for the deceased by President Richard Joel.

A short video depicted emotional photographs of soldiers and civilians alike mourning the losses of family and friends, as well as pictures of the *Mercaz HaRav* victims and the recently murdered members of the Fogel family. YU students bowed their heads in sorrow and recognition for the fallen of Israel, cognizant of the vast sacrifice so many thousands have made for the continuance of Am Yisrael.

The *tekes* continued with two keynote speakers: an impassioned address in Hebrew from Rav Goldwicht, and a speech by Ido Aharoni, Consul General of Israel in New York, extolling Israel's accomplishments since its founding and urging students to appreciate their Jewish homeland. Celebrated and talented YU acapella group the Y-Studs also performed several songs throughout the presentation.

In keeping with the abrupt vacillation between sorrow and joy that is common to the Jewish existence, the tone of mourning soon turned to one of rejoicing as YU students literally rang in Israel's Independence Day with a blast of the *shofar* (ram's horn) and a special evening prayer. Upon the completion of the *tekes*, students were ushered into the Ruben gym-

nasium for a *chagiga* (celebration) featuring Nafsheinu orchestra and an Israeli-style dinner of felafel and shwarma from Golan. Students sang and danced in jubilation for hours amidst a gym dripping with the customary blue-and-white, draped in Israeli flags and a sense of pride in their nation.

The following morning, festivities continued early with a special *tefilla chagigit* (celebratory prayer), breakfast, and *Yom Iyun* (day of learning) co-sponsored by Bnei Akiva and TAC in honor of the special day. Students enjoyed festive prayers replete with singing and dancing, followed by blue-and-white themed breakfast treats and several speakers. Rabbi Haim Amsalem, founder of Israeli political party Am Shalem, Mrs. Nechama Price, and Rabbi Michael

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## SHEM Yom Hashoa Ceremony Draws 1100

Rivkah Rogawski

On the evening of Monday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, somber students streamed into Lampport Auditorium to participate in the Yom Hashoa Ceremony organized by the Student Holocaust Education Movement (SHEM). Ultimately drawing a crowd of 1100 students, the ceremony incorporated songs by the Maccabeats, prayers recited by Rabbis Blau and Reiss, a candle-lighting ceremony, and speeches by YC student Josh Ambramson and renowned speaker Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis to create a program that would allow each member of the audience to emotionally connect to the Ho-

locoust.

This year's Yom Hashoa ceremony is the second organized by SHEM, a student initiative started last year by current SHEM President Simon Goldberg. Before SHEM organized last year's ceremony, Yom Hashoa at YU was traditionally commemorated with a lecture that drew around 100 people. Last year's ceremony drew a 500 people, a crowd that more than doubled this year.

Goldberg started SHEM in order to shift the focus in Holocaust education from advocacy to education. In his own words, his goal

was "to create a movement that would inspire young people to learn the lessons of the Holocaust in a way that informs their moral imaginations, strengthens their empathetic character, and encourages their involvement in the democratic civic process." Along with Vice President Mindy Sojcher and a board consisting of 8 other students- Holly Hampton, Tzvi Solomon, Briana Mizrachi, Kevin Blumenfeld, Yisroel Katz, Sara Malka Berger, Miriam Weiss, and Eliezer Seidenfeld- Goldberg organized a symposium earlier this

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## OP-ED

## From the Desk of the Editor

Rivkah Rogowski, Editor-in-Chief

I became involved with *The Observer* before I even set foot on campus, sending an article about environmentalism in to the August issue of my sophomore year. Within my first week at Stern, I was writing again, enraged by the slogan that the Honors program then sported (and which they have thankfully since done away with). Since then, *The Observer* has become an integral part of my Stern experience. I can't imagine these past three years without the brainstorming, editing, emailing, and feverish last-minute writing that constitutes the wonderful frenzy of being an *Observer* editor.

*The Observer* truly attempts to provide a forum for students to both hone their writing skills and express themselves on topics about which they care. However, as I have come to realize over the past three years, *The Observer*, like any other forum, can only be as thoughtful and relevant as its contributors. As a paper, it mirrors the passion and drive of its student body. If Stern women are interested in carrying out meaningful conversations that can shape them as thinkers and leaders, then *The Observer* can play an integral role in such conversations.

Looking forward, the next year at Yeshiva University will be a year in which such conversations will be necessary. With the merging of the faculty and significant changes expected to the Student Life department, the Yeshiva University undergraduate body will be undergoing a transitional period. Hopefully, the student body will want to be involved in the transition and will utilize the power of the free press to make their opinions heard. *The Observer*, under the guidance of rising Editor-in-Chief Renee Kestenbaum, will try to present the upcoming changes in a clear and informative fashion, as well as providing interesting and amusing content.

This last issue of *The Observer*, the final one under my Editor-in-Chiefdom, focuses on Israel issues in honor of Yom Ha'Atzmaut. In the News section, Renee Kestenbaum reports on the success of an Israeli literature course, while Rachel Schultz discusses the recent TLZ learnathon to benefit students learning in Israel for the year and Elana Goldberg reports on the Yom Ha'Atzmaut celebrations at YU.

In the Features section, you can find an interview with Stern College's Dr. Mordechai Paldiel by Suzanne Mazel. Dr. Paldiel's enthusiasm for Zionism is well known to students of his popular History of Zionism course. Also in the Features section is the hilarious results of *The Observer's* Six Words campaign, which polled the graduating seniors for the six word stories that encapsulated their YU experiences.

Over in the Sports section, *Anu Ratzim v'Heim Ratzim* looks at the life of Gal Friedman, the first Israeli athlete to win an Olympic Gold Medal. In Arts and Culture, Abbie Wasserman eloquently reviews the second volume of *Something Rich and Strange*, YU's undergraduate literary magazine.

In Opinions, you can read a compelling argument, presented by Rena Rotter, for getting more involved in campus life at Stern. In Style, in keeping with the Israel theme, Dassi Fant discusses the Urban Outfitters photo shoot in Israel.

Before I bid farewell to the caf's delectable macaroni and cheese, the packed elevators in 245, and all the sstuds, I must individually acknowledge and thank the wonderful *Observer* staff who have made being Editor-in-Chief such a pleasure:

Tamara Freiden and Rachel Schultz, the ever-competent News Editors, who were always game to cover the hock, even at the last minute.

Suzanne Mazel, who maintained her equanimity while putting together the Features section and always ended our conversations with "luv".

Sari Margulies and Deborah Zharneest, who added some Art and Culture to the newspaper along with Sari's signature comics.

Helen Unger, the uber-competent and organized Science and Health editor, who was always in on time with well-edited and thoughtful articles.

Chana Cooper and Tzipora Schwartz of the Opinions section, who conscientiously ensured that each article reflected thoughtful and well-written student opinions.

Meira Lerner of Sports, whose impetus lent a women's newspaper some athletic legitimacy, and whose articles were always timely and well written.

Aimee Rubenstein, whose flair for Style ensured that her section was beautifully laid out with attractive, well placed photos.

Lauren Burstein, the Israel editor, who valiantly kept the section going and wrote interesting, topical articles on Israel current events.

Ann Levenson and her extraordinary team of layout people, for getting the newspaper out at the eleventh hour every month and making it look as good as it does.

Lastly, I would like to thank the staff and student body of Stern College for Women, for giving me three wonderful years of eye-opening experiences. Have a wonderful summer, and looking forward to hearing about all of your accomplishments next year!

## Going Forward

Renee Kestenbaum,

Editor-in-Chief 2011-2012

As finals conclude and friends part for the summer, the *Observer* prepares for a new school year here at Stern College for Women. Debating the effects of Sy Syms and Student Affairs restructuring is a certainty. We will commemorate the tenth anniversary of 9/11, celebrate student achievements, and, as always, continue to report on school-wide happenings.

We can't wait to launch the *Observer's* shiny new website in the fall. Throughout the coming year, you can expect to regularly find us online as well as in newsprint.

Thank you Estie Neff and Rivkah Rogowski, this year's superb Editors-in-Chief, two excellent models of both journalism and leadership that I am thrilled and honored to follow.

Good luck with your remaining finals. I hope your summer is fun, significant, relaxing, and uplifting.

The Yeshiva University

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## NEWS

## Canceled Israeli Fiction Course Broadened Student Perspectives

Renee Kestenbaum

The characters in this literature course eat pita dipped in hummus, lounge on the beach in Tel Aviv, and pick up hitchhikers while continually building lives despite terror and tenuous politics.

This is Contemporary Israeli Fiction, a new offering from the English department this spring. In the class, students read translations of short stories and novel excerpts by Israeli authors. In open discussions led by Professor Adina Kay-Gross, they compare classic Israeli authors like A.B. Yehoshua and Amos Oz with newer names in Israeli fiction, such as Etgar Keret and Eshkol Nevo. Students also consider themes like generation gaps, social stratification, isolationism, and Arab-Israeli relations (a perennial favorite) in modern Israeli writing.

Perhaps, however, one should say that this was Contemporary Israeli Fiction, as the course will not be offered in the future.

"We have made a principled decision that modern Hebrew literature courses at Yeshiva should be taught in Hebrew only," said Dr. Zefira Cohen, Coordinator of the Hebrew Language Department. Dr. Cohen teaches advanced Hebrew literature on topics such as biblical themes and short stories by S.Y. Agnon.

Dean Bacon cited Yeshiva's commitment to the Hebrew language, as "the language of our people." She described an ongoing dedication to everything that comes with language: religion, Zionism, and culture.

In addition, Dean Bacon believes that while translations are valuable if the reader is unfamiliar with the original language, students at SCW are capable of studying Israeli literature in its original language.

Literature is best studied in the original, she believes, since that language best communicates the nuance and symbolism of the culture.

Some students believe shelving the course is the right decision. One anonymous student believes that closely analyzing a translated text is impossible and, consequently, translations should never be studied in a literature course. "The beauty of language gets lost in translation," agreed Aliza Kaye, SCW '12, and adds that she would like to read Israeli writing in Hebrew if her level was higher.

Chani Markel, SCW '12, disagrees. "Imagery, metaphors, and dialogue can all be expressed successfully [with] a good translator." Markel, along with other Contemporary Israeli Fiction students, expressed dismay at the cancellation of what she called "one of the best classes I've taken at Stern, ever."

"I definitely have a broader understanding of Israeli writers and how their literature has progressed since the beginning of the state," said a student who asked to be identified by the initials BU. BU said the course's only drawbacks were reading excerpts instead of full novels and its large enrollment.

Reading different political viewpoints was "an eye-opening experience" for Markel. *Almost Dead*, by Assaf Gavron, alternates perspectives between an Israeli who survives three terror attacks, and a comatose Palestinian who recounts the events that led him to help execute bombings. Students also read a fictionalized autobiography by Arab-Israeli writer Sayed Kashua.

"The whole class was pro-Israel and of course me too," said native

Israeli Shir Fuchs, SCW '11. "But when I read [*Almost Dead*], I started feeling like maybe the Arabs do get a voice and maybe we should listen to them and talk to them.... I still think ... that of course we're right, but it makes you think again about the whole situation and not take your thoughts for granted."

When news hit of the March 24 Jerusalem bus bombing, students had recently finished discussing Kashua's novel, *Dancing Arabs*. "[Professor Kay-Gross] spoke about it in class," Markel said. "She asked us how we felt about it," in light of the Arab perspective they had discussed.

"That makes you switch right back," said Fuchs. "Never mind the book, this is real life." Many students agreed with her.

Today's Israeli authors are often more concerned with individual lives than big picture politics and terror. Kashua reflects on his identity as both an Arab and an Israeli, as well as on his relationship with his father and grandmother. Gavron ironically points out that significant tragedies can happen to individuals by setting his character's (canceled) wedding on 9/11. Contemporary writers also feature a broad range of voices (including Sefardi, woman, immigrant, and Arab) and use slang. The class learned that some authors are often criticized in Israel for not being political enough in their writing.

An important aspect of the course was discussions in which students were able to "voice our opinions in an open, non-judgmental environment," Markel said. This structure emphasized that "there are unlimited ways of interpreting literature," according to an anonymous student. "It was en-

lightening that Hashem created so many different types of people."

Fuchs, Markel, and BU all agreed that consigning Israeli literature to the Hebrew department limits the student body's exposure to it. Between 8-12 students study advanced Hebrew literature each semester, while Contemporary Israeli Fiction had 30 spots and closed out by the third day of registration. "The overwhelming majority of students won't be taking an advanced Hebrew literature course, no matter what type of interesting material it will include," said B.

Many students' lack of facility with Hebrew seems the cause, though conflicting requirements and schedules may also play a role. Dean Bacon hopes that students will be motivated to study Hebrew literature, reminding students that advanced courses can be audited or taken on the P/N system.

"We want our students to develop a desire to master Hebrew language," said Dr. Cohen, "and to strive to acquire the skills that will allow them to negotiate with the wealth of Hebrew texts and its unique linguistic implications."

The specific texts read in Contemporary Israeli Fiction will not likely be featured in SCW's advanced Hebrew courses. "These are really hard texts," said Fuchs, who read some course material in Hebrew. "If it's easy enough to read in Hebrew, than you should read in Hebrew, but I don't think it's easy enough.... I didn't even study them in high school. I'm Israeli, and they were hard for me to read."

"I don't think most people in Stern would be able to read the books in Hebrew," said Markel. "Because it's our culture, it should be available to everyone, not just those who can read the language."

## Happy Birthday to Our Homeland

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Rosenzweig respectively communicated original thoughts and words of Torah to students, adding an important component of learning to an already joyful and exciting day.

The afternoon programming featured an outdoor barbecue lunch, as well as a performance by Eitan Katz and several carnival-style booths boasting various games and foods. Students basked in the warm sun and munched on popcorn, cotton candy, and snowcones as they mingled with friends in celebration of Israel's continuity and ever-increasing strength. The tone of the day was truly one of joyous celebration and appreciation for the state of Israel, and students left the festivities with a renewed sense of gratitude for our homeland.

Congratulations to the Yeshiva University Class of 2011!

## SHEM Yom Hashoa Ceremony Draws 1100

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semester focused on teaching students how to document the stories of survivors.

The SHEM board began planning the Yom Hashoa ceremony toward late February, employing a three-pronged approach to simultaneously commemorate the victims, communicate a lesson, and call attendees to action. They also chose to focus the activities around the theme of "Maintaining Humanity" during the atrocities of the Holocaust, highlighting both the difficulty of maintaining humanity as well as on the individuals who were able to maintain their dignity and values. In order to avoid minimizing the tragedy, a video presentation showcasing what was lost in Holocaust took a prominent position early on in the program.

The program opened with the National Anthem performed by the Maccabeats, followed by an opening address by Goldberg and Yizkor recited by Rabbi Yosef Blau. After another performance by the Maccabeats, SHEM introduced Josh Abramson, a student speaker who shared how the Holocaust had personally affected his religious experience. Although Abramson is not related to Holocaust survivors, his passion for Holocaust education stems from the fact that Holocaust remembrance played a prominent role in his religious commitment, thus tying into the evening's theme of maintaining humanity.

The evening's keynote address was delivered by Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis, founder of the Hineni kiruv organization and a survivor

of Bergen-Belsen. With a trembling voice, Jungreis spoke movingly of her personal experiences in the Holocaust, urging the audience to allow her stories to penetrate their hearts. According to Sojcher, Jungreis was chosen because, as a survivor who has worked in kiruv, she is the "prime example of someone who was in the Holocaust but kept her faith", thus manifesting the evening's theme of "Maintaining Humanity".

Jungreis's address was followed by a candle-lighting ceremony led by Sara Malka Berger. Six candles, representing the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust, were each lit by someone from a different age group. The first candle was lit by a Holocaust survivor, followed by Rabbi Reichman, Aliza Abrams, Josh Abramson, and two youths.

The ceremony concluded with Kel Maleh Rachamim, recited by Rabbi Yona Reiss, a poem read by Miriam Weiss, SHEM Educational Director, and Hatikvah performed by the Maccabeats.

In keeping with their goal of galvanizing students to action, SHEM ended the ceremony by drawing students' attention to pledge cards placed at their seats. Rather than requesting money, the pledge cards asked students to commit to volunteering to sell Triangles of Truth for present-day genocide victims, visit Holocaust survivors, open a door for a stranger, or speak at a Shabbat table about the importance of Holocaust education.

Student feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive. Sojcher explained that over the

course of the week following the event, she was pleased to find that the students who approached her to thank her had each connected to a different aspect of the eclectic program. However, one student, who wished to remain anonymous, did express the concern that only one survivor had spoken at the event, explaining that her own grandparents were Holocaust survivors and that she wished that had been able to participate. Despite this, she still found that the evening had allowed her to commemorate the Holocaust in a meaningful fashion.

Students interested in getting involved with SHEM can contact them at [torchofmemory@gmail.com](mailto:torchofmemory@gmail.com). The movement is currently accepting applications for the board.



## NEWS

## TLZ Learnathon Benefits Students in Israel

Rachel Schultz

Torah Letzion (TLZ) is the newest topic of conversation amongst Yeshiva University and Stern College for Women students. This valuable organization raises money to help send post-high school students to Yeshiva and Seminary in Israel, an opportunity that hopefully deepens their connection to Torah and Judaism. Run by Marc Merrill (YC '10) and several other YU and Stern students, TLZ is slowly but surely gaining attention for its cause and enabling more students to realize their dream of spending a year learning in Israel.

Recently, on Wednesday May 4, TLZ held its first Learnathon in Stern, where students heard inspiring words of Torah from Rav Meyer Twersky, Rabbi Josh Blass, and Rebbetzin Aviva Feiner. The event was a tremendous success and raised \$5,600. Additionally, TLZ is in the running to receive a \$100,000 grant from the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles as part of "The Next Big Jewish Idea." According to their website, [www.thenextbigjewishidea.com](http://www.thenextbigjewishidea.com), the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles launched this search in an attempt to provide "a unique opportunity for individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and organizations to submit their innovative ideas for programs that will strengthen and benefit the greater Los Angeles Jewish community." Fortunately, TLZ received enough votes in round one of the search to become one of the top ten finalists.

*The Observer* sat down with Mark Merrill and a current TLZ scholarship beneficiary in order to find out more about who TLZ is benefitting and how they choose their students. (For privacy purposes, the student's name is not given).

Observer (O): How many years did you spend in Yeshiva in Israel? What Yeshiva were you in?

TLZ Student (TS): I learned in Yeshivat Shaalvim for a year and a half. I was able to learn for the half a year Shana Bet because of a Torah Letzion scholarship, a Shaalvim scholarship, and money I had

made working at a "Shabbas home" my first year back after Israel. O: How did you hear about Torah Letzion?

TS: The summer after Shana Alef, I was in HASC and mentioned to a friend of mine that I really wanted to return to Israel for Shana Bet but could not afford it. That friend happened to also be a friend of Marc Merrill's (the founder of TLZ) so he put me in touch with Marc. O: Can you describe the TLZ application process in detail?

Marc Merrill (MM): At the time that [the student] and I spoke, TLZ did not yet have a real "application process." Scholarship money was essentially allotted on a first come first serve basis. In this case, [the student] was very lucky because I had extra money to give out and then I additionally raised more money specifically for him. At this point, TLZ uses an application which can be found on [torahletzion.org](http://torahletzion.org). Once the student has filled out the application, an interview is conducted. Additionally, we get in touch with the student's high school to get more information. Then, the five-person TLZ selection committee decides which applicants would be most deserving of the scholarship money. O: Why do you believe you were selected to receive a scholarship?

TS: If it was not my good looks, I guess I would say it was my friends from Yeshiva who Marc knew. They told him I was a hard worker who is serious about my Torah learning. Marc and I had some nice phone conversations, which may have helped as well.

O: How did your time in Israel impact who you are as a person? How did your Yeshiva experience shape you as a Jew?

TS: My Yeshiva experience dictated most of my Israel experience because I did everything with my friends from Yeshiva. My time in Yeshiva truly compounded and shaped my Israel experience. Being in Yeshiva enabled me to understand what it means to live in Israel. I learned one of my seda-

rim with an Israeli student, I was "adopted" by an Israeli family (you know, battle hardened veteran father with the huge beard and little boys with the huge *srugees* and long *peyos*), and I became friends with many Israelis in Shaalvim.

How did that impact me? I realized in Israel, which I had not previously understood or appreciated, the true unity among all religious Jews. We all have similar goals in Torah, Mitzvot, and Eretz Yisrael. I learned and experienced this firsthand in time spent in settlements in Yehuda and Shomron, in tiny apartments in Meah Shearim, in the home of my adopted family, in a mansion hidden in the heart of the old city, at the Shabbas table in a Charedi home in Sanhedria, and in the Chadar Ochel of my own Yeshiva. That's the Israel aspect.

The Yeshiva itself was also extremely impactful. Shaalvim consisted of a bunch of guys like me who intended to improve their learning abilities and started out knowing the importance of Torah, but hadn't internalized its importance or experienced learning in the way only a Yeshiva atmosphere can provide. I'm not trying to say that we were all angels, but rather we were thankfully properly oriented. I came to Yeshiva to be exposed to serious Torah learning. I wanted to establish the foundation that would enable me to learn for the rest of my life. That was my goal coming in and when I got to Yeshiva, I was blown away! I had known Gemara was important, but I did not really know how to properly engage in it and figure out the questions that needed to be asked. I lacked the tools and the knowledge to know which Rishonim and Acharonim to turn to in which situations. I wanted to be able to find areas of Torah that spoke to me personally. The atmosphere in Yeshiva was filled with guys struggling to grow in these endeavors and they were succeeding, just like me. There were great Rebbeim to help with advice in learning and general life questions. They truly showed me that learning was fun.

So I guess that is the classic answer, but I think I had the classic Yeshiva experience, because the most important aspect of the Yeshiva experience is the development of both learning skills and love for Torah. It's the life force of the Jewish people- in Yeshiva, you learn to live!

O: Do you feel that a Yeshiva/seminary experience is imperative for an Orthodox teenager? If so, how and why?

TS: First of all, guys have an obligation to learn Torah, so Yeshiva is a must in terms of gaining learning skills and Torah knowledge. Girls can learn too, but I do not think they need the year for the Limud Torah aspect as much as guys do. However, the year in Israel is necessary for both genders for the exposure to "normal Torah Judaism." Israel gives one the opportunity to learn Torah (because that is what we are meant to do) and to do Mitzvot (because that is what Hashem has commanded). Engaging in Torah and Mitzvot teaches us positive Middos which we must inculcate into our everyday lives. This is the true importance of Torah and Mitzvot. At this point in my life, that is what I have determined about the importance of Torah and Mitzvot. I am sure there is much more to it but I have many more years ahead of me to figure that out. Also, I think it is important for both guys and girls to go to Israel for the year because it gives them time for introspection away from distractions of secular society. It enables them to truly get to know themselves and what Judaism is all about. For me, Shaalvim was located in the middle of nowhere and because I had no money, the only way to get to and from Yerushalayim was to *trempe*. Also, our contact with anyone outside of Yeshiva consisted of the basic plan on Talk N Save and the two hours during lunch and after night seder that we could use gmail. (Other internet access was very limited). So, from my own experience, I am quite partial to the whole "get away from the real world thing" in

order to really have some personal introspection time. It helps, you just grow automatically.

O: Why do you believe that Torah Letzion is an important organization?

TS: TLZ is an important organization because it enables those who might not otherwise be able to go to Israel for the year have the above mentioned imperative experiences.

O: What do you feel is unique about Torah Letzion as an organization?

TS: I guess the fact that it is run with love. I know Marc personally (we hang out and talk a lot in YU) and he spends so much of his time trying to help more people experience Israel and develop into serious Torah Jews. He puts endless time and effort into TLZ because he wants all Jews to have the same experience that he had.

O: Do you have any advice for students who may have trouble financially paying for Yeshiva/Seminary?

TS: Apply to Torah Letzion! And if that is not enough, you should work during the summers to have some money saved up- it can be fun, like at a camp, etc. Also, you can help pay for Yeshiva/Seminary with Bar/Bat mitzvah money. It is definitely worth the investment or at least it was for me. If you pay for Yeshiva/Seminary with your own money, you will be more inclined to take advantage of the time you spend learning and will be more driven to make the most of your experience in Israel as a whole.

O: How do you think the Jewish community can and should help those students who find it difficult to afford Yeshiva/Seminary tuition?

TS: Donate. Also, raise awareness regarding the importance of the Yeshiva/Seminary experience because people need to understand why they should donate and how essential this cause is.

## 2011 Senior Dinner Draws Greatest Attendance Yet

SENIOR DINNER from page 1

combined the two while discussing the new Maccabeats video.

While a few members of the student body spoke out against the sum of money spent for a YouTube sensation, others were thrilled with the choice. "I thought GloZell was a great addition to the night. She was funny, friendly, and had a HUGE smile that couldn't be missed," says Brittany Thomas (SCW '11). "It was nice to take a break from studying and see the YouTube hit in action!"

Others disagreed. Says Tirtza

Spiegel, SCW Super Senior, "I was slightly disappointed with GloZell's performance at Senior Dinner. I believe Andy Samberg or Rebecca Black would have been a more appropriate choice for the event."

Students overall enjoyed the kodak moments and the opportunity to meet a person whose YouTube channel gets millions of hits. Glozell herself tweeted the next morning, "I had the best time performing at Yeshiva University in New York. I am an honorary Jewish

Person now! Shalom and Blessings XOXOXO."

If not for the steak, snuggies, and Glozell, seniors in attendance very much appreciated the camaraderie between the wide spectrum of students who came. Graduating senior Aliza Yaros noted, "I was very impressed by the diversity of students that joined together for senior dinner. You were able to feel the sense of community that everyone felt as a grade and that we were all proud to be graduating together."

Jessica Gross couldn't agree more. "It was great to see everyone getting together despite different interests, majors, future plans, and busy schedules for a night out to celebrate the end of their time in YU."

The classy, Black-and-White themed steak dinner couldn't have been a better way to mark the ending of an era for the seniors of 2011. The dinner with friends reminded many of the very strong bond they have with their university, and especially with those who

attend it.

"The real feather in the cap is the boast that the Class of 2011's dinner had the largest sign up and turn out of any other year's dinner in YU undergrad history with a record 300 attendees," remarks Mazel. "Whether that came about because of the fabulous senior boards, classy venue and menu, or entertainment, remains unknown. But happily, the bar was raised a few notches for future senior dinners."



## FEATURES

### From War-Torn Belgium to Stern College: Dr. Mordechai Paldiel

Suzanne Mazel

For Dr. Mordechai Paldiel, the classes that he teaches at Stern College for Women - Holocaust history and Zionism - personally resonate very strongly for him.

Born in Belgium in 1937, Dr. Paldiel was a young boy when World War II began.

Dr. Paldiel describes this time as "going through a storm but [one does not] even know it's a storm".

He and his family fled Belgium to Marseilles, France, staying ahead of the Nazis.

"We were always a step ahead of the Germans," said Dr. Paldiel. "We were lucky, more alert, and it's miraculous."

Dr. Paldiel was indeed lucky: he was never in a camp nor separated from his family too much. During Dr. Paldiel's time in France, he attended the village school, was taught by nuns, and was never told he was Jewish. His parents thought it best that he not know his religious background.

There is a memory Dr. Paldiel recalls of being in a home in Marseilles and having a fight with other children in a courtyard.

"One child through a stone at me and it hit me on the nose," Dr. Paldiel said. He now has a lit-

tle scar, the only lasting physical mark from that time period.

With the help of a French Catholic priest, Dr. Paldiel and his family crossed over the French border to Switzerland. The family walked at night, a curiosity a young Dr. Paldiel could not help but ask about. To help keep him quiet, two French men assisting his family with the crossing told Dr. Paldiel they were all going to meet Tarzan and to look up at the trees for a sign of Tarzan.

Dr. Paldiel says he "felt so excited to meet Tarzan that when we were captured by police and we had to do the hands up, I still felt it was part of the great excitement".

Even Dr. Paldiel's mug shot, taken that night, shows a very excited boy. Later, he and his sister were taken to a children's camp run by the Jewish Federation in Switzerland. The family spent the last year of the war in Geneva.

Dr. Paldiel said "to be a Jew is a gift but it's also a dangerous thing because targeted" by others.

After the war, in 1950, the Paldiel family came to America, to Brooklyn, NY. Dr. Paldiel attended a Lubavitch Yeshiva then made *aliyah* (immigrated to Israel)

in 1962.

"I always felt very proud (of being Jewish) and I decided I wanted to live in a country, in a Jewish country," said Dr. Paldiel. He feels living in a Jewish country is freeing since then, "if someone doesn't like me, know it's for one thing and not because I'm Jewish."

In Israel, Dr. Paldiel "felt I can be truly human, fully Jewish. I don't have to justify myself, and no one's threatening me because I'm Jewish."

Dr. Paldiel studied history and political science at Hebrew University, then went onto Temple University for his doctorate. Afterwards, he moved back to Israel where he became the director of the Righteous Among the Gentiles department at Yad Vashem, the noted Israeli Holocaust Museum.

It was while he was the department director that he found his name in an archive of children who had been in a home run by Rabbi Schneur Zalman Schneerson, a distant cousin of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, in Marseilles. This answered the question of where his memory of the stone throwing came from, since his parents, "like many survivors, felt the less

it was talked about the healthier," said Dr. Paldiel.

"I found out I owe a world of thanks to this man," Dr. Paldiel said.

Also while working at Yad Vashem, Dr. Paldiel researched the French Catholic Priest who helped his family cross the border. He, along with others, went out to thank that priest for saving their lives.

"I think it's an obligation to [say] thank you, and I fulfilled my obligation," said Dr. Paldiel.

He also got a copy of the arrest report from when he and his family crossed into Switzerland, as well as copy of his mug shot at six years old.

Said Dr. Paldiel, "I was so lucky I was able to pass through this hell sound and safe."

When Dr. Paldiel moved back to the States to be closer to family, he felt he had an obligation to teach so that other's can know the atrocities of the Holocaust as well as the freedom in Israel.

Dr. Paldiel feels the Holocaust is "something every Jewish person ought to be very knowledgeable about for the simple reason that there was an attempt to destroy

us."

In the past, Dr. Paldiel has written books, articles, and given lectures about the Holocaust with special focus on those who tried to save Jews. He pointed out that the difference between his teaching style of the Holocaust and most other people is that he also teaches about people who rescued. He also devotes a portion of his teaching to dealing with the questions the Holocaust raised in Jewish law, such as how to handle working on the Sabbath and kosher, tough situations for which there was no precedent.

He also teaches a History of Zionism course, to teach how the state of Israel came into being with another miracle.

He encourages people to feel privileged and lucky to be a part of Judaism.

"Life is a gift," said Dr. Paldiel. "Be proud that you're a Jew, and find out how each and every one of you, in your own way, can contribute to making Jewish life more meaningful because to be a Jew is a privilege, it's a gift from God."

### Stern Student Serving Israel

Rivkah Rogawski

The Yeshiva University undergraduate body is, for the most part, committed to supporting Israel both politically and through volunteer activities: Yom Ha'Atzmaut is one of the most vibrant holidays on campus, and strong student-led organizations like the Israel Club and Yeshiva University Policy Advocacy Club (YUPAC) provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their love of Israel. However, serving in the IDF or doing a year of *sherut leumi* (national service) represents a commitment above and beyond buying Israeli products or running a 5k for Israel. Despite this, the Stern women who have made this commitment look back on the experience as one of the most rewarding years of their lives, both in terms of what it meant ideologically as well as the practical life skills they gained.

As a country in a constant state of warfare, Israel has a standing army draft. In order to gain an exemption, or *ptor*, from this draft, citizens must provide proof of religious commitment - as many Ultra-Orthodox do - or other ideological objection. *Sherut leumi* is one way for religious women to contribute to the country after receiving their *ptor*. *Bnot sherut*, as they are referred to, help provide supporting infrastructure through working in schools, providing wel-

fare services, and working with the developmentally disabled, among myriad other positions.

Unlike army service, which is a two-year commitment, *sherut leumi* positions can be one or two year commitments. Some women do *sherut leumi* for two years, but at two different positions, while others spend two years in one place. For Israeli teenagers, the *sherut leumi* year chronologically parallels the American gap year. High school students usually commit in the senior year of their high school, although some opt to study in a *midrashah*, or seminary, before beginning their service.

The infrastructure for the *sherut leumi* is created by organizations called *agudot*. There are three main *agudot* - *Agudah*, *Bat Ami*, and *Aminadav*. For those who choose to do their *sherut* in Jerusalem, *Iriyat Yerushalayim*, the Jerusalem Municipality, also distributes positions. Each *agudah* supports its *bnot sherut*, organizing seminars and lectures and providing a support system for the women. These services are paid for by the Israeli government, as is the housing and stipend that all *bnot sherut* receive.

For most Israeli religious teenagers, applying to *sherut leumi* parallels the seminary application process. The different *agu-*

*dot* recruit in Israeli high schools and the twelfth graders then apply to positions in service areas of their interest through the different *agudot*. The *agudot* then organize tours and interviews for the students, and after they are accepted to a particular position the students commit to an *agudah* and a *sherut leumi* job.

While most *sherut leumi* positions are filled by Israelis, motivated foreigners can also contribute to the country by doing *sherut leumi*. Miri Koolyk, a junior at SCW majoring in physics, decided to do *sherut leumi* after Pesach during her seminary year at Nishmat. Koolyk was motivated by the desire to "serve the country and contribute in a way that is standard to citizens". She went through the same process as Israeli citizens, applying through *agudot* and interviewing, ultimately deciding to do her *sherut* at a day center for developmentally disabled teens where an Israeli friend had worked.

While Koolyk served her *sherut leumi* without making *aliyah*, Talya Laufer, a sophomore at SCW double-majoring in physics and Talmud, is a dual citizen whose parents live in Israel. Laufer actually attended high school in Jerusalem and then spent the year at Migdal Oz, after which she did

*sherut leumi* at Darkeinu, a seminary program for women with developmental disabilities. Pessy Leibowitz, a SCW junior majoring in psychology, although not an Israeli citizen, also attended high school in Israel and then did *sherut leumi* working as a public relations consultant at Yad Sarah, a religious volunteer organization.

For Laufer, doing *sherut leumi* was intrinsically connected to her desire to ultimately settle in Israel. Similarly, Koolyk hopes to one day make *aliyah* - however, doing *sherut leumi* made her understanding of the *aliyah* process more complex. She explains that she now knows "what it means to live in a foreign country - you lose your support system." Engaging with Israeli society on a practical, visceral level, without the framework provided by a year-abroad program, gave Koolyk a "reality check" about what living in Israel is like.

Working with developmentally disabled adults also helped Koolyk understand what a real work environment is, complete with teamwork, goals and responsibilities. Laufer, who was responsible for the well-being of 14 developmentally disabled women whose parents were 4,000 miles away, similarly found that the her *sherut leumi* year made her "grow up".

As both Koolyk and Laufer worked with developmentally disabled individuals, they also gained an appreciation of the uniqueness and contributions that each person, regardless of their capabilities, brings to society.

Leibowitz spent her time at Yad Sarah interacting with foreign donors, dealing with donations, and planning itineraries for people from America and Canada. She found the experience incredibly rewarding, noting that despite the fact that Yad Sarah is officially affiliated with the Ultra-Orthodox sector of Israeli society, the work atmosphere was "Jewish but not stuffed down your throat". Leibowitz had the opportunity to work with both religious and non-religious people, and still maintains connections that she made in her *sherut* year.

For these three Stern women, the *sherut leumi* year allowed them to contribute to Israel while also learning practical life skills. Although Koolyk admits that it was a relief to return to America after her *sherut* year, she, along with Leibowitz and Laufer, hopes to return to Israel one day to settle permanently.



## FEATURES

### Six Words

We asked the class of 2011 to email in the 6 words that encapsulate their YU experience, and this is what they told us.

Standing in elevator hold your breath

Weekdays at Stern, weekends in Teaneck

No more sstuds, empty inbox now

Party goes on in the Heights

My closet filled with YU paraphernalia

Moving on, moving up, moving out

Mac and cheese in the caf

Mooching free food unites us all

We we we we so excited

Enabled and ennobled by President Joel

Free food and grade inflation YES!

Best 30 seconds of my life

Was a blast, glad it's over.

Will miss the elevators- group hug!

Yala habita, yala habita, yala habita.

Had the time of my lifeeeee/ I owe it all to YU

Signing up for shuttle at 4.

Economy crashed. No jobs. Presidential fellowship!

Went for degree, learning. Found family.

It began and ended with Abigael's.

Kibbe Lehmagin Sambusak Mecshe Sephardi Party

Na Na Nach Nachma Nachman Neoman

Ivy for those who seek it.

Transformative edifying eye-opening exciting actualizing challenging

It is what it is, ladies.

The Commentator keeps me sane here.

That's the way the cookie crumbles.

Into piratical woods, tarantara- my life.

Looking forward to full night's sleep.

Greatest city here I come- Jerusalem.

No MRS, I'll settle for B.A.

Signing up for shuttle at 4.

I like girls better than gemara.

I still can't count to six.

Thank G-d I'm out of here.

Escaping from under the lion's paw.

### Yom HaAtzmaut 5771: Puzzle Column

David Kolmar

The first 5 students to solve the puzzle column and email the results to rtrogawski@gmail.com may or may not get a \$5 gift certificate.

I had a blast at the BBQ for Yom HaAtzmaut held at the Wilf campus. The weather was beautiful, and it was nice to forget about my upcoming finals and have fun with my friends. And fun I had, spending each part of the BBQ doing a different activity with five friends. They're all really different; they're each in different years at Stern (one is a sophomore), and I know them from different places. (Well, one of them I'm not really sure how I know. Just from around, I guess.) Can you reconstruct what I did with each friend (including Ora), how old each is, and how I know them?

My five friends are Maayan, who is an only child; Shuli; the one who played on the Blow-Ups in lawn by Rubin Hall; the one who I know from class; and the super senior (who, I must say, really is super).

I know the freshman from my hometown, while I know the girl with whom I played soccer in Tenzer Gardens from a club we're both members of.

The junior and the senior are the girl with whom I went to the carnival on Amsterdam Ave. and the girl with whom I sang in a Kumsitz, in some order.

The girl with whom I ate is older than Melissa but younger than the friend whom I know because I'm also friends with her sister.

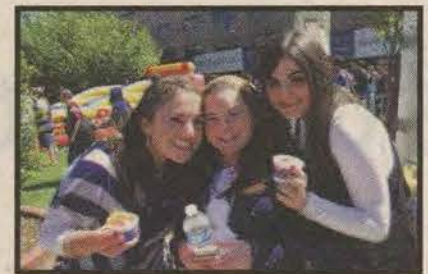
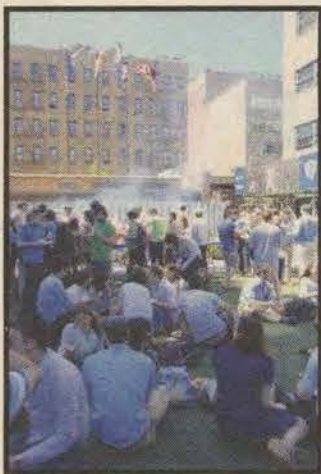
Gila, whom I know from class, is younger than Shuli, who is younger than the girl with whom I went to the carnival.



# STUDENT SNAPSHOTS

## Student Snapshots from Yom Ha'Atzmaut 5771

Photo credit to Julia Siegal and Mati Engel





## SPORTS

## Anu Ratzim V'haym Ratzim: Gal Fridman

Meira Lerner

During the summer of 2004, my family and I flew to Israel to visit relatives. One morning, my mother flung the newspaper at me. On the front cover was a full-page, color picture of an Israeli athlete with a Bronze Medal around his neck. Written in bold letters over the picture was the slogan "Arik Zeevi melech Yisrael chai v'kayam".

Ecstatic as I was to learn that Israel had received a medal in the Olympics, I was also mildly entertained by Israel's outpouring of happiness over a mere Bronze Medal. I was raised in a house that cares greatly for the Olympics. Though my family does not generally watch much television, during the Olympics, we are plastered in front of the TV for two weeks straight; it is kind of like having the Superbowl every day and night for two weeks. As a spoiled fan of Team USA, however, winning a Bronze Medal is simply not enough. Sure, I expect Team USA to win in the overall medal count, but I also anticipate dominating the Gold Medal count.

I always dreamed of helping Israel win its first Gold Medal on the softball diamond, though considering that I would then be playing against the practically undefeated Team USA, I knew that could be no more than just a dream. Still,

I wondered how Israel would react to winning its first Gold Medal while listening to Hatikva play over the roaring crowd.

And that very year, at the Athens Summer Olympics of 2004, it happened. For the first time in Israel's history, an Israeli athlete brought home the Gold.

Gal Fridman began windsurfing at the young age of seven. Gal was not the best student because, while all of his friends were busy studying for exams, he was always out on the water preparing for his next international competition. By the time Gal was twenty-one, he was already an internationally ranked windsurfer, winning a bronze medal in the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996.

Though Fridman's career continued to demonstrate his potential for greatness, Fridman was not chosen to represent Israel in windsurfing for the 2000 Sydney Olympics, losing a spot on the team to Amit Inbar. Fridman went through a reformation after that rejection; he realized that in order to reach greatness, he would have to put himself into windsurfing full time and strengthen his entire body. Thereafter, whenever Fridman was not on the water, he was cycling.

By 2004, Fridman was in the best shape of his life, ready to repre-

sent Israel in Athens. The country was in a good mood following Arik Zeevi's Bronze Medal win in Judo. Yet, the people starved for their first Gold. Fridman felt that pressure, but, as he said in an interview, that pressure only gave him even more motivation to succeed. And succeed he did. Fridman came home with Israel's first - and still, to this day, only - Gold Medal of any Olympics.

Gal's impressive feat brought joy and unity to the entire Jewish nation. As Hatikva sounded in the crowd's ears, Gal stood upon the podium to receive his Gold Medal with the Israeli flag waving high above. However, at that instant, Gal was not only thinking about himself but of all the Jewish athletes who had fallen in pursuit of Gold. Hence, after receiving the Gold Medal, Gal announced that he was dedicating the medal in honor of the eleven Israeli athletes who were murdered at the Munich Olympics. As he announced, "The moment I arrive in Israel, I will go to the memorial site and present them with the medal. I represent the Jewish people and that is the main thing. My medal also belongs to the athletes who were not so successful." Gal represents the perseverance and unity we strive for as a nation.

## Sports Quotes of the Month

*Perfectionism is a dangerous state of mind in an imperfect world. The best way is to forget doubts and set about the task in hand... If you are doing your best, you will not have time to worry about failure.*

- Robert Silliman Hillyer

*The day you take complete responsibility for yourself, the day you stop making any excuses, that's the day you start to the top.*

- O.J. Simpson

*"When I was younger, I thought that the key to success was just hard work. But the real foundation is faith. Faith - the idea that 'I can do it' - is the opposite of fear ('What if I fail?'). And faith creates motivation which in turn leads to commitment, hard work, preparation...and eventually success."*

- Howard Twilley

*"In order for there to be ups, there must be downs. Remember all your failures, so when you succeed you can look back and have pride that you had strength enough to overcome."*

- Unknown

The Observer wishes the  
student body a wonderful and  
relaxing Summer!!



# ARTS AND CULTURE

## From Blank Canvas to Beautiful Masterpiece: A Review of *Something Rich and Strange, Volume II*

Abbie Wasserman

"The breeze through the window brushed gently across my cheek, warming and resting my mind." Thus reads the opening paragraph of Alan Dawidowicz's poignant poem "October's Chill". Though it is just one of many insightful and reflective quotations present in *Something Rich and Strange*, this brief line aptly reflects the way the reader will feel while experiencing the second volume of Yeshiva University's exemplary, student produced literary magazine. A tremendous follow-up to the already impressive first volume, the beautiful writing, artwork, and poetry found in within the pages of this second volume leave one feeling tranquil, meditative, and warmed.

Exploring its contents, one easily perceives the ink, sweat, and hard work put forth by the student authors and artists whose conceptions are featured in the journal's 60 pages. The entire journal manifests the power and journey of creation that Hannah Rozenblatt elegantly describes when she writes that "My ink stained hands, pure white with smudged black puddles covering the fingertips, are the finest poetry I have ever beheld."

Through a willingness to share their literary and creative works and be open to vulnerability, the journal's contributors provide readers with a gift: the opportunity to glimpse the thoughts, emotions, and passions of their fellow students. In doing so, the reader is invited to engage in the process of self-reflection, to delve into themselves and walk away with a sense of fulfillment and recognition. As Rozenblatt continues, "What drug can be so presumptuous as to claim to be more entrancing than the art of the writer or more exhilarating than the fragrance of that ink, set on paper in elaborate swirls." Indeed, the broadminded reader will find themselves en-

chanted and delighted by the swirl of self-revelation created by probing the emotions of these fine artists and writers.

The diversity of the submissions included in volume II is commendable and admirable. Every piece chosen lends a new light and reveals a new angle to a different aspect of life. There are polar bears, Wi-Fi, and war, and there is self-reflection and emotion. The drawings, essays, and poems exhibit the lightheartedness and darkness that is real life. Some works may not necessarily speak to everyone, but rest assured that with such ample variety, even the most critical of readers will be able to connect with at least one of the pieces contained within the magazine.

The layout and design shows careful planning, allowing the reader to navigate what they want to read or view. Four categories with page numbers and authors are found at the start of the journal: photography/art, creative non-fiction, fiction and poetry. Each work has the title and author's name for easy reference. The arrangement is perfect; the interspersed black and white pages complement and enhance the included works such that each submission is highlighted but does not overshadow its fellow pieces. Sprinkled with a touch of color here and there, every piece is strategically placed to cater to the reader's needs.

Left in awe by the brilliance of each submission, *Something Rich and Strange* is a must read for any Yeshiva University student. In his creative non-fiction essay, Israel Heller writes that "[YU] was not quite the environment I had in mind when pondering maturing and my personal growth." However, the pages of the literary magazine are filled with tools for personal growth: a look at trees, friendship, and the bitter taste of maturity in YU are but small sam-

### Around NYC

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

**Tuesday, June 14, 2011, 6PM-9PM**  
 The Museum Mile Festival  
 Free access to nine museums on 5th Avenue  
 Visit [www.museummilefestival.org](http://www.museummilefestival.org) for information

**Monday, June 20, 2011, 7PM**  
 Author Event: Michael Sims  
*The Story of Charlotte's Web:*  
*E. B. White's Eccentric Life in Nature and the Birth of an American Classic*  
 Barnes and Nobles  
 150 East 86th Street, New York, NY 10028, (212)- 369- 2180  
 Visit [www.bn.come](http://www.bn.come) for additional information.

**June 6-July 30, 2011**  
*Shakespeare in the Park*  
*All's Well that Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*  
 The Delacorte Theater in Central Park  
 Visit [www.shakespeareinthepark.org](http://www.shakespeareinthepark.org) for tickets and show times

**Daily through mid-October, 10AM-5PM**  
*Free Kayaking*  
 The New York City Downtown Boathouse  
 72nd Street Pier  
 West 72nd Street, about 200 yards south of the 79th St. Marina  
 Visit [www.downtownboathouse.org](http://www.downtownboathouse.org) for more information and other locations.

**Ongoing through Monday, October 5, 2011**  
*Pompeii: The Exhibit*  
 Discovery Time Square  
 226 West 44th Street, New York, NY, 10036, (866) 987- 9692  
 Visit [www.discoverytsx.com](http://www.discoverytsx.com) for ticket pricing

**Ongoing Exhibition**  
*Culture and Continuity: The Jewish Journey*  
 The Jewish Museum  
 1109 5th Ave at 92nd St, New York, NY 10128  
 Visit [www.thejewishmuseum.org](http://www.thejewishmuseum.org) for museum hours

ples of the many stirring compositions and inspiring oeuvres provided for the reader to enjoy and become lost within.

Heller compares his life during the collegiate experience to a blank canvas "to be drawn on as [he] see[s] fit." To borrow from Heller's apposite metaphor, life is

but a blank canvas and living is the trial and error process of writing and rewriting over the stains that make us who we are. To complete a unique masterpiece, one must first internalize new ideas and push herself to grow and learn from the world around her. *Something Rich and Strange* is a gift

that should be cherished, a hidden treasure- like the one found when the reader flips the bottom of the journal's pages to reveal the antics of an adorable seahorse.





## OPINIONS

### Graduation: To Go or Not to Go?

Rena Rotter

I'm sure that all of you attended your elementary school graduation. I can probably assume that each and every one of you was at your high school graduation. Those events in your life were momentous because they signified that you were starting a new chapter in life and moving on to another stage. Your high school days were filled with such wonderful memories that you might even wish you could go back sometimes. You attended your graduation to commemorate your experiences and accomplishments in school, because you were proud of your achievements. However, when I asked my friend if she would be attending the Yeshiva University graduation, she shrugged and said, "Probably not." Unfortunately, she isn't the only one who is thinking this way.

Don't get me wrong. I understand that graduations are not on your list of top ten fun events. It is a far trek to New Jersey, and the ceremony will most likely be incredibly boring, but shouldn't your college graduation be a priority?

For me, the three years I spent at Stern College have been as formative, if not more, than my high school years. College has been an opportunity to challenge myself, to discover who I am, and to grow into the woman I aspire to be. I believe that many of you have had similar experiences. So why would you choose not to attend your college graduation and commemorate these achievements, just as you attended your previous graduation ceremonies?

The way I see it, this decision to participate in graduation is broader than whether or not to attend the ceremony itself. At-

Tamar Shmaryahu

Have you ever wondered why it is that our e-mail blasts about protests are mostly reactionary? Why is it that most college or political protests are fueled by anti-settlement or anti-Israel apartheid sentiment and not pro-Israel sentiment?

As I returned from the Edmond J. Safra Synagogue in the Upper East Side last Shabbat I encountered one of these anti-Israel protests. They chanted, "You're glitz, you're glam, you're building on stolen land" and "All your diamonds cannot hide, your support for Apartheid".

The protest was aimed at Lev Leviev, a Bukharian-Israeli diamond billionaire and real-estate mogul whose support of the Israeli settlements is allegedly in violation of International Law. Lev Leviev's Danya Cebus Company is involved in the construction of Matityahu East, a settlement that has sparked much controversy and Palestinian resentment. Similarly, Leviev

tending graduation is indicative of your entire approach to your experience at Stern College, and how much you partook in student life. Attending graduation demonstrates your school pride and also supports Yeshiva University as an institution.

The lack of student pride in Yeshiva University has bothered me throughout my time at Stern. Most students at Stern undertake heavy course loads in order to graduate as swiftly as they can, thus spending as little time as possible in this university. They regard their college years as a means to an end. I find it frustrating that very rarely do people take advantage of all the marvelous opportunities Stern has to offer and become active participants in the Yeshiva University community.

Each night, we receive tons of e-mails. You read emails from the Chabad club, the Psychology club, and perhaps even the weekly meditation series. There are at least four events occurring each night—yet many students attend none. Some students do not even read e-mails, displaying total disinterest in campus life. Over the past few years, the selection of courses has expanded in many different departments. So has the opportunity for leadership. If you believe that something is lacking here at Stern, YOU can do something about it! You can take initiative to plan an event or form a club. The necessary resources are all available—you just need to take advantage of them.

It is difficult for me to imagine how someone could attend college without being an active participant in the college community. For me, participating in the Stern community has been a large piece of

my college experience. My tenure in college has been about breaking out of my comfort zone, trying different experiences and determining my passions. My involvement in Stern College has allowed me to meet new people and has opened my mind to unique ideas. Speakers whom I initially thought were boring have inspired me to change my entire lifestyle. College has been pivotal in my exploration and discovery. However, this was only possible because I took advantage of what Stern has to offer.

There are about 1.5 million people living in New York City, and as we walk down Lexington Avenue, we are just another number. However, as we enter Stern (and show our IDs, of course!) we are no longer anonymous—we become unique individuals because Stern is a place that encourages student-led initiatives. For example, this April, the second annual "So You Think Stern Can Dance" show was performed. All of the choreographers and dancers were students; in fact, the event was created by students who felt that the talent of our very own student body needed to be showcased.

On a personal note, for the past three years I have been on the volleyball team, a sport I love. After high school, I thought I'd never have the chance to play in a league, for most of the games are on Saturdays. However, at Stern I am able to play volleyball because the athletic department works hard to ensure our games don't conflict with Shabbat. Only at Stern!

We cannot blame our college for the lack of school spirit, because Stern is a happening place. The same people that mumble that they attend YU, secretly hoping that it will misconstrued as NYU,

stay in each week for Shabbat. Indeed, there is an ongoing joke in the Observer's Purim edition about the embarrassment of purchasing a Shabbat ticket in the cafeteria. This should not be happening in our college! Students should want to stay in Stern for Shabbat. In fact, they should be receiving phone calls from their parents begging them to come home for Shabbat more often. Why is it that in the university with the most Orthodox Jews, there is such a lack of community on Shabbat, a time that should bring us together?

Interestingly, New York City dealt with a similar struggle in the 1970's. The city was suffering from tremendous financial debt and tourism declined. New Yorkers lost their faith in their city. This was strange because in 1972, the Twin Towers—the two tallest buildings in the world—were built. How could a city with so much potential, featuring the world's greatest attractions, lose faith in itself?

To make New York more appealing in the eyes of the residents and tourists, the New York Commerce department hired an advertising agency to raise New York spirit. They came up with the slogan "I love New York", which spread like wildfire around America. By the 1980's, New York found itself in an economic boom, and the city continued to flourish throughout the 80's, 90's and until today. People once again were proud to call themselves New Yorkers.

Yeshiva University needs to initiate a similar campaign. Stern has actually attempted such an undertaking with the navy blue Stern American Apparel sweat-shirts. They are trendy and comfy and display school pride, yet

not enough people are wearing them. Another example of garnering school pride was spirit week, which lead up to Beren Unite, the one *Shabbaton* that most of the Beren campus attends. However, although it was a great idea, not many people showed up to the spirit week events, or even the *Shabbaton* itself.

Yeshiva University needs a strong campaign to increase school spirit. Let's all go out, buy the cool new sweatshirts, and wear them proudly! Go to an event or two when you are not busy with work because you may just make a new friend and learn something you didn't know before. Maybe even donate to the senior gift to reciprocate to the college that has provided you with all of these opportunities.

If you are indeed a senior, although you may have been planning on attending graduation, some you may be thinking "probably not". I urge the latter group to reconsider your decision because your decision epitomizes your approach to your college career. It will help you determine if you have fully taken advantage of all Stern has offered you, and whether you should be proud to call yourself a true Stern alumnus.

So yes, graduation may be a boring ceremony where we all wear goofy gowns that make us feel awkward, and spend most of our time making sure that our caps don't fall off instead of listening to the speeches. But it's an opportunity to commemorate the time you spent at Stern, where you can have fun with friends you have spent the last few years with, and get some closure before starting a new chapter in life. And, of course, graduation is also a time to show your school pride.

### Diamonds and Settlements

is devoted to the development of settlements in other controversial areas such as Har Homa, Ariel, Ma'aleh Adumim and Zufim.

Even though the discomfort I experienced while passing by that protest group was acute, I came to realize the ineffectiveness of such demonstrations. Although they do receive publicity and effect change in inefficient organizations, like the United Nations, their politics do not reach the situations at hand. The involvement of Leviev, one of the wealthiest people in the world, in Israel's interests is far powerful. The man is worth billions, but besides his financial success it is his philanthropy that invigorates the Jewish community. This man knows exactly where to invest so that his values and political pinions become material: Israeli settlements, restoration and preservation of old Jewish synagogues in Europe, and Jewish education.

Lev Leviev's Lubavitcher family fled Uzbekistan and arrived to Is-

rael in 1971. Leviev peaked in the diamond industry after the blood diamond scandal with DeBeers. In addition to his success in the diamond industry, Leviev has created a diverse international real estate empire in which he builds shopping malls, housing projects, highways, and railways. One of his many properties includes the New York Times building, reportedly worth \$525 million. Forbes ranks Leviev as one of the 210 wealthiest people in the world, and he is probably Israel's richest man.

The story goes that when Leviev visited the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Brooklyn, the Rebbe told Leviev to always "remember his family tradition" and give back to the Jewish community. Although Leviev looks up to Bill Gates, he chooses to do "in-reach" before he does outreach. He chooses to take care of his own before he can before a universalist like Bill Gates chooses to be.

His goals are ambitious; the New

York Times magazine even quoted Leviev's assistant who stated that his goal is to make a free Orthodox Jewish education available to every Jew in the United States.

So, why is it that Jews with a pro-Israel stance barely protest? Perhaps it is a positive thing and an indicator that the Jewish people *do*, taking action, instead of building themselves out of baseless words. Maybe this is what the settlements are all about; they're about taking action and making our dream a reality.

The news is bursting with information regarding peace talks and the settlement issue remains at the center of the debate. Israel's Prime Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu is not willing to budge on this issue, and the Palestinian leaders say that they cannot go forward without discussing the settlements as the central issue. Netanyahu is prepared to make six major points as he makes his way to Washington next week. Among these points are

the demands that the Palestinians must recognize that Israel is the national homeland of the Jewish people and the right to retain the settlement blocs. Netanyahu also emphasized that it is only possible to make peace with those who want to make peace. The argument for the settlement blocs is simply that this country is our home, not a temporary dwelling, but a home in which we were, we are and we will be existing in then, now, and forever.

The settlements aren't just political maneuvers; they are a testament to Jewish history coming alive. In fact, settlements are the epitome of what it means to act like Leviev. Leviev understands his purpose in life very well and understands that the fulfillment of his purpose translates into action, and effective action at that.



STYLE

The Social Network-ing Style

Aimee Rubenstein

Style is not just about what you wear. Unlike fashion, which is merely the prevailing mode of dress, style captures the essence of who you are and how you want to be seen by others. This year I have quipped about topics such as room décor, geek-chic glasses, married hat debates, and the replacement of engagement rings with nose rings- among various other "style" appropriate articles. However, the year would be incomplete without focusing on the most consistently popular style that is guaranteed not to go out of date- at least for another cyber era.

This swelling trend is the "Facebook Style", or the way in which one displays one's profile for the entire globe to view at whim. The obsession with "Facebook Style" is inescapable, appearing on Blackberries and iPhones as well as Mac laptops and Stanton Hall desktops. Nobody can deny the guilty pleasure of stalking, posting, and obsessively, repeatedly refreshing Facebook's homepage in order to create and comment on the style in profile pictures. This (usually edited) photograph in a rectangular box below a well-known horizontal blue line is supposed to publicly debut an authentic depiction of the person whose name is being searched, stalked or friended. But, unlike many other style trends of the twenty-first century, the popularity of the "Facebook Style" portrayed in the profile picture is not going to change any time soon.

Unlike what you wear daily to class or pose for in your onllysimchas.com photographs, your profile picture must describe you in just one quick click. Ironically, of course, the majority of images posted as profile pictures cannot be taken at "face" value. First

of all, there is the trend of editing every photograph that is uploaded online. Some crop others out in order to receive full attention and compliments from their center stage position. Others boost



Joanna Ross -Tash

Students updating their Facebook profiles see them as a form of self-expression

the color and quality of the photograph, which usually makes the photograph and the people in it look brighter- both figuratively and literally. Finally, there are those who use the blurring tool. This technique is handy for both the frumshantitas who want to sail below the radar and the fashionistas fearing wardrobe malfunctions.

Social-networkanistas find that not only is photo editing an issue to deal with, but also outfit-repeating; there is no closet big enough to avoid being branded the outfit-repeating offender. In real life, those who repeat the same outfit can get away with it if they leave an appropriate gap between the two times that they wear the same thing. But in cyberspace, once an outfit is worn and photographed, it is officially plastered on everyone's wall and mind. Nobody wants to face the dreaded comment: "I like your dress. That's the one you're wearing in your default pic." There is no solution to this problem other than to not upload pictures from every moment of your entire life- an option

which hardly seems promising.

Another accessory necessary for appropriate "Facebook Style" is the capability to become a chameleon online. Social stereotyping peaks in the Facebook world, but unlike in college where it is difficult not to be judged by the way you look and dress, Facebook allows you to play with different stereotypes. For instance, the tomboy-soccer-playing girl can fool the world by sporting a profile picture that is artsy, with an unusual vantage point, or quirky, with an unexpected facial expression. Of course, there is the classic tilt of the head or posed laughing pictures

that many use in their profile. And when in doubt, strike a genuine smile- a classic pose that invites the push of the 'like' button.

"Facebook Style" is all about the style- no matter how digitized- of the person that is connected to the World Wide Web. According to Facebook, people spend over 700 billion minutes per month on the site, and that is a whole lot of "Facebook Style" strutting around. Although the new technological applications aim at connecting people from past, present and future relationships, it is difficult to deny the fact that our society follows the "you are what you wear" motto. Therefore, even though several applications available to tweak a profile picture usually render artificial-looking self-portraits and repeated fashion crimes, it is still possible to create a pseudo-profile picture that captures the person that you strive to be. In conclusion, Facebook is not a runway; all social-networkanistas should get off the site and start a new fad that takes place in real-time.

Urban Outfitters in the Holy Land

Dassi Fant

Strolling the streets of Holy Land has never really induced any stylistic inspiration as far as fashionable garments are concerned. Choked by fastened buttons, seamed stockings, and pilling polyester skirts in the blistering heat, Israeli women look more like victims of fashion than those inspired by it. Yet there it was, upon the glossy pages of Urban Outfitters early spring catalogue, staring back at me like a disapproving Jewish grandmother clucking her tongue at my brazen religious indifference. The model, clad in a pale rose blouse with a Peter Pan collar and eyelet detail, buttons done up well above her collar bone, hid behind oversized 80s inspired glasses with no visible makeup and a head covering that most Jewish girls refer to as a 'shmata'.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the truth has surfaced. The yentes of yesteryear have indeed inspired modern day fashion and piqued the artistic curiosity of Urban Outfitters' photographers, which explains the Israel-based photo shoot staged in the aforementioned catalogue.

To give credit where credit is due (primarily to Marlene Marion, the head photographer), the rest of the magazine showcases beautiful and almost awe-inspiring photographs of stunning models, clothes, and scenery in an imaginative and genuine way. Images of crashing waves feed into the teaming alleyways of the Shuk, which feed into the vast sand dunes of the desert. From Tel Aviv's Dan Panorama, to the Dead Sea, to the Judean desert, each photograph captures the unique flavor that we Jews know so well and cherish so much.

The truly stirring aspect of this campaign is the positive light in which Israel is painted- or to be more accurate, pixilated. Hebrew signs are in clear view and landmarks and architecture is easily recognizable. Those who want to see the beauty of Israel now have an unbiased and authentic view of a country condemned to apartheid status, from a source that has no agenda other than deliver great fashion.

Additionally, each model was provided with a camera to document his or her travels throughout the country. Although the individual models' points of view differ greatly, a common thread is visible in each snapshot. Israel is culturally diverse, robust, and scenic country that has much to offer to a plethora of people in a variety of ways. The footage is raw, the scene is non-staged, and the emotion is real. And the best part of this unique documentation? It's on Facebook for thousands of people to see and enjoy.

Yet there is still a profound irony to this campaign. Firstly, Urban Outfitters has yet to open a brick-and-mortar retail outlet in Israel, much to the chagrin of the numerous American teenagers and young adults that come to the country in casually uniformed droves. In the light of such an obvious demand for an Urban Outfitters store, many raised eyebrows at the propriety of such a photo shoot.

However, there is another question that has the potential to make even the most poised PR rep start biting her perfectly manicured fingernails. Urban Outfitter was once known to be the primary retailer that successfully merchandised Keffiyah-inspired scarves, speculated to be modeled after a certain Palestinian leader. These scarves were dubbed as the 'anti-war Keffiyahs', yet still elicited a harsh response from a distinct population that found such a trend offensive, for obvious reasons. Eventually, Urban Outfitters halted their production of these scarves and they are no longer available on the showroom floor.

Could this photo shoot be the universe's way of administering an apology of sorts? Or perhaps, is it a window of opportunity that opens after the door is shut for aspiring Jewish fashionistas everywhere? The question remains to be answered and the first step of a long journey are yet to be taken. But in the meantime, from the neutral standpoint of fashion, the world can now see the modern milk and honey offered by a land that so many misinformed people are too quick to dismiss.

If you would like to advertise in the Observer, please

contact us at mandelco@yu.edu.



*On behalf of the student body of Stern College, The Observer would like to thank Dean Zelda Braun for her many years of tireless work on our behalf. You have gone above and beyond as a student advocate and for this you have our eternal gratitude. We wish you hatzlacha as you continue on in what will certainly be a fruitful and productive retirement. Stern will not be the same without you.*