



The Yeshiva University

# OBSERVER

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## Town Hall Meeting: Do You Trust YU's Integrity?

**Adeena Kleiner** Wednesday, October 30th—Stern students and faculty joined on the downtown Beren Campus for the highly anticipated Town Hall Meeting with President Richard M. Joel. Taking place once a semester, Town Hall Meetings promote open dialogue between the student body and the President.

The atmosphere at the first meeting of the year was relatively subdued. Student Life Council Co-President, Penina Cohen, commented, "An issue is usually brought up at the Town Hall Meeting when the committee feels that an administrator is not taking an issue seriously. While there are many issues we are working on right now, we didn't feel that we needed to publicize them at a Town Hall Meeting because the administration has been very receptive." Despite the lack of controversial topics on the agenda, there were still a number of surprising and poignant moments.

The President began by announcing that YU has received full authorization to begin



**Irit Greenboim**

the new master's program in Speech Pathology and Audiology this upcoming semester. This news was followed by the announcement that

Chief Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has been appointed as a Kressel and Ephrat Family University Professor of Jewish Thought. It will

be a dual professorship, beginning with one six-week period at Yeshiva University and two six week periods at New York University. Rabbi Sacks will begin teaching on the Wilf campus this upcoming spring. Danny Ayalon, the former Deputy Foreign Minister and Israeli Ambassador to the United States, will also be teaching on the Wilf campus for an eight-week period on Middle Eastern Foreign Policy.

The President concluded his introductory announcements by introducing his new Chief Financial Officer, Toby Weiner, and announcing that YU was one of the thirty schools to receive the JedCampus seal, "an award of approval given to colleges that demonstrate strong, comprehensive solutions to students' mental health needs."

Students then began with questions. The first concern brought up was regarding security's training in emergency situations, specifically with regard to handicapped

*Continued on page 4*

## Paving the Way: First U.S. Yoatzot Halacha Graduation

**Zahava Rothschild** "We want Yoatzot in our community; we need Yoatzot in our community," proclaimed Dr. Giti Bendheim, addressing the first-ever American graduates of Nishmat's two-year U.S. Yoatzot Halachah Fellowship Program through the Miriam Glaubach Center. Over the course of one decade, Nishmat has graduated 85 Yoatzot Halachah. The most recent five graduates proudly received their certificates of graduation on Sunday morning, October 27th, 2013.

Looking out at the filled sanctuary, Rabbi Yona Reiss proclaimed the event a "ground-breaking graduation," speaking proudly of the first American-educated graduating class of Yoatzot Halachah. The five graduates, Dena Block, Nechama Price, Lisa Septimus, Tova Warburg Sinensky, and Avital Weissman, were immediately offered jobs in various communities and each are already situated in their formal positions. Due to the great need, yet the small but growing contingent

of Yoatzot Halachah, many Yoatzot actually cater to numerous synagogues and communities simultaneously.

Since 1998, Nishmat has been rigorously training talented and compassionate women to address personal and sensitive questions concerning *taharat hamishpacha* (laws of family purity). Any question that needs a rabbinical determination is passed on, but many of these incoming questions concern the basic laws, often forgotten, kept incorrectly or misconstrued by couples, and can be addressed by the Yoetzet Halachah herself. The Yoatzot Halachah intensively learn the relevant Jewish law concerning family purity and attend lectures in the areas of gynecology, obstetrics, fertility, lactation, psychology, sexuality, family dynamics and genetics. Especially in light of the over 200,000 questions that have been addressed to Yoatzot Halachah in the past decade through phone calls, texts, emails, and personal meetings,

*Continued on page 7*

## Put on Your Yarmulke, It's Time for...Thanksgivukkah?

**Makena Owens** Some are calling it a "once in a lifetime experience." It has provoked unprecedented originality, especially new recipes, that challenge even the most experienced Jewish mothers. And if your company specializes in holiday treats, you would be a fool not to capitalize on the phenomenon gracing the holiday season this year. Forget Chrismukkah—this year, it's Thanksgivukkah.

Most of us have "liked" the Facebook page and drooled over the BuzzFeed article trending about Thanksgivukkah, but let's get some facts straight. This year, the first night of Hanukkah is on November 27th, and Thanksgiving is the following day. In other words, Thanksgiving and the first full day of Hanukkah will collide for the first time since 1918. However, since some reporters and bloggers are not fully aware that a Jewish holiday begins at the night and not during the day, they have incorrectly interpreted this festival clash. For those of us waiting for our Thanksgiving dinner to be lit in chorus with the first Hanukkah candle, we have another 77,000 years to go. And the last time that phenomenon occurred was all the way back in 1888. The Associated Press even dutifully recognized the occurrence with an article entitled, "Gobble Tov."

The roots of Thanksgivukkah can be traced back to a year ago. Dana Gitell, a professional marketing specialist from Massachusetts, claims to have coined "Thanksgivukkah" in 2012 when she realized the incredible promotional opportunities available for the 2013 holiday season. Gitell quickly copyrighted the new term, and together with her

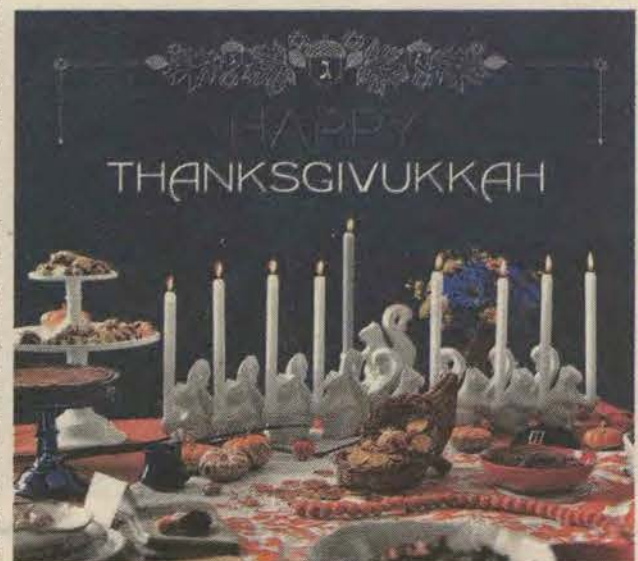
sister created several clever Thanksgivukkah products, the most popular being a t-shirt playing on the familiar Woodstock slogan. It reads, "8 Days of Light, Liberty, and Latkes."

Gitell's shirts are sold on ModernTribe.com along with some other festive products. But Thanksgivukkah proves that you don't need to be a marketing specialist to come up with innovative holiday merchandise. Enter the "menurkey," a turkey shaped menorah invented and patented by nine-year-old New Yorker Asher Weintrub. Through Asher's Kickstarter campaign and the help of his parents, he had already grossed \$45,000 by the middle of October.

While decorations and clever slogans certainly add to a festive mood, they are only secondary to food. One would be remiss to even consider Thanksgiving, and especially any Jewish holiday, without constructing a delicious celebratory menu. Manischewitz, *Continued on page 6*



**Norman Goldberg**  
Graduates (left to right) Lisa Septimus, Nechama Price, Avital Weissman, Tova Warburg Sinensky, Dena Block pose with their certificates of completion.





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## Of Agunot and Yoatzot: Shifting a Paradigm of Powerlessness

*A chained woman.*  
This is the way *agunot*, women who have unsuccessfully sought a *get* (a bill of divorce) from their husbands, are described in the media. A cursory scroll through Facebook in the past couple of weeks would lead one to believe that the Orthodox community has created a proper epidemic of *chained women*—helpless victims, with no recourse but to spill the most intimate details of their lives onto the pages of the *Forward*, or the *New York Post*, in the meager hopes of gaining communal sympathy, support, and maybe, just maybe, freedom.

But, in the case of Gital Dodelson, who published her highly personal story of being an *agunah* in the *Post* on November 4th, the publicity did not gain her freedom. Rather, her story has erupted into a battle of hurt pride and flying accusations. Her ex-husband, Avrohom Meir Weiss, is legacy to a long line of Rabbinic greatness. He is the descendent of the esteemed Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895—1986) who, ironically, was the champion of many *agunah* cases. Weiss' family has chosen to stand by him through the storm of controversy, stubbornly insisting that Dodelson's story is full of lies and exaggerations. The "Free Gital" Facebook page, created a few months prior to the story breaking, has since received over 13,000 likes.

Perhaps there is another side to this story. Perhaps it is true, as the Weiss/Feinstein family claims, that it was the Dodelson's family who refused the terms of arbitration, rather than the other way around. But when it comes to an *agunah*, all we see is a trapped woman. A victim, with no recourse but to beg, plead, grovel, or turn her back on her religion all together (a course many women in similar positions have chosen). It is hard to buy the 'two sides of the story' claim when one party has all the power at his disposal, the other party none at all. The *agunah* crisis is not a disagreement between equals. It's a fight between the powerful and the powerless.

Rabbi Jeremy Stern, Executive Director at the Organization for the Resolution of *Agunot* (ORA), said in a recent interview, "In abuse, there's no other side. Abuse is never justified." Refusing to give a *get* is a form of abuse.

Let's turn to another event that took place this month: the American Jewish community celebrated its first graduating class of *Yoatzot Halachot*, women trained in the complex laws of family purity. It was a pristine moment of female empowerment.

Sitting in the front row of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue (America's first Jewish congregation, founded in 1654), I was privileged to witness this momentous step in Jewish ritual life. Five distinguished female leaders, including Stern's very own Nechama Price, were presented with certification and recognition for two years of intensive study. Each graduate will go on to serve as the *yoetzet* in five of America's largest Orthodox communities, advising

women about intimate details of family life, fertility, and sexual health and practice. The event was attended and praised by nearly all of standout Rabbis in the Orthodox community today. An overwhelming feeling of pride, accomplishment, and progress pervaded the synagogue as each woman stepped forward.

"We face squarely, without apologetics, that women confront a problem of inequality," said Dr. Giti Bendheim, *Yoatzot Halacha* Chair, in the program's opening remarks, citing the current *agunah* crisis as an example. "This program, and the accomplishments of these five women, is a way to combat that reality," she concluded. Rabbi Yona Reiss, Av Beit Din of the Chicago Rabbinical Council, referred to the program in his keynote address as "an idea whose time has come."

On the one hand, progress, empowerment and real change. On the other, laws that seem as rigid and recalcitrant as the husbands they cruelly empower.

The events of this month have left me questioning: Is there truly room for progress within our strict, and often unforgiving, code of law?

An optimist, I choose to believe that the answer is yes. Women occupying positions of leadership is no aberration. It is harbinger for what is to come. "Visionaries know how to recognize a trend," said Lisa Septimus, *Yoetzet* of the Five Towns. If we, as women, are bothered by the inequalities within our religious system, it is within our power to confront them.

I write to encourage young women within the Jewish community to shift this paradigm of powerlessness. Rather than railing against the inequality that underpins the problem, shift the frame. It is within our hands.

With regard to the *agunah*

crisis, the most proactive way to address the problem is by signing a halachic prenuptial agreement before marriage (a *halachic* prenup). Unlike the standard prenup, a *halachic* prenup solely addresses the issue of the *get*. The *halachic* prenup has two essential elements: the first is an agreement that both parties, in the case of separation, will go to a particular Beit Din to adjudicate the issuance of a *get*. As there are many corrupt Batei Din (one of the most significant problems ORA faces), the couple agrees upon which Beit Din to use before marriage.

The second part of the *halachic* prenup is the financial element. The prenup states that if a husband refuses to issue his wife a *get*, he is penalized \$150 a day (nearly \$55,000 a year). According to the Beit Din of America, this has been 100% effective in preventing cases of *agunot*. It's important to note that the point of a halachic prenup is not for the wife to cash in on the husband's recalcitrance; rather, it provides a financial disincentive for a husband to refuse to issue a *get*. Unlike the *ketubah*, the prenup is a civilly binding legal document.

On the verge of marriage, I myself signed a *halachic* prenup last week. I was pleasantly surprised by the ease and straightforwardness of the process. In a corner of the busily humming Heights Lounge, I stood with my fiancé, a notary, and two friends and did my part to ameliorate a crisis that need not be.

Paradigms don't shift easily. But they do shift. Female *halachic* disempowerment is an uncomfortable reality to face—but it is a reality that need no longer be our own.

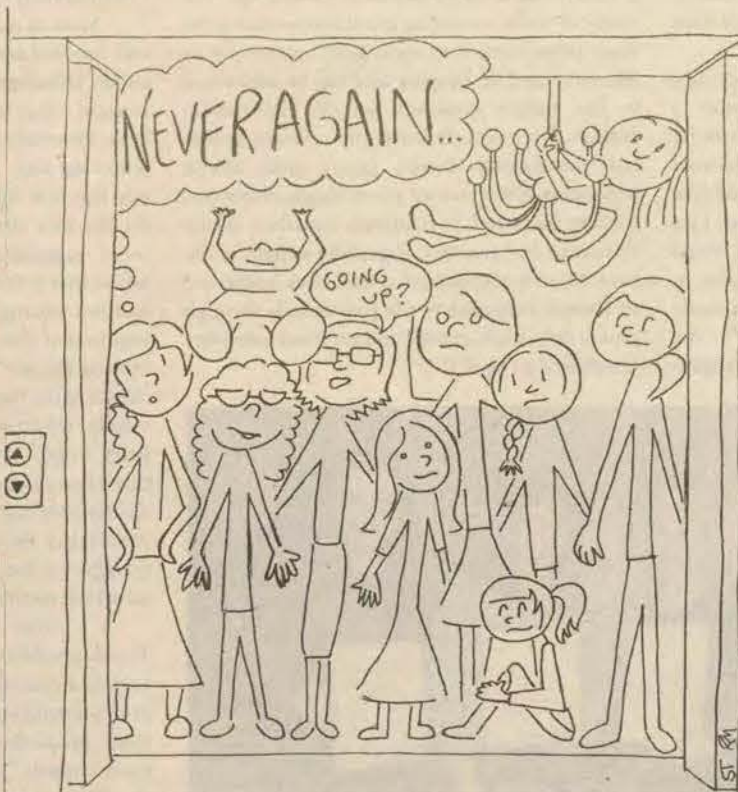
*A chained woman.* Let us not fall prey to ensnaring ourselves.

Hannah Dreyfus

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### Pick of the Month



...until tomorrow...

Cartoon by ST Schwartz and Rachel Miriam Rosenfeld

Interested in writing for The Observer? Stop by 20c of Brookdale or email us at [scwobserver@gmail.com](mailto:scwobserver@gmail.com) and WRITE ON!



## 60 Jewish Communities Benefit from Torah Tours

**Shalva Ginsparg** The Center for the Jewish Future's Aaron and Blanche Schreiber Torah Tours program dispatched close to 300 Yeshiva University students to 60 Jewish communities throughout North America this past Simchat Torah. For over four decades, Torah Tours has sent teams consisting of about 4 to 8 YC and Stern students to enhance the holiday experience of participating communities. With destinations like Quebec and Boynton Beach, this year's program empowered students to lead prayer services, give lectures, run youth and young adult programming, and generally contribute to a festive, Torah-oriented atmosphere throughout the holiday.

For the past eight years, Torah Tours has been run by Aliza Abrams, director of the CJF's Department of Jewish Service Learning. Abrams, a Stern graduate, fondly recalls her Torah Tour trips to Boston and San Francisco in her junior and senior years at Stern: "I am still friends with the people I went on Torah Tours with and am still in touch with some of the community members that brought in our group."

After graduating Stern, Abrams served as a presidential fellow at the CJF, which is when she was first charged with spearheading the Torah Tours program. Because she had such a positive



experience as a student, she has since expanded the program to include CJF's "Jewish Life Coast to Coast," a winter-break initiative, which, in Abrams's words, is "basically ten days of Torah tours."

In the weeks leading up to Sukkot and Shavuot, the two holidays for which Torah

Tours provides programming, Abrams describes her office as "a locker room at half time of a football game." Inundated with applications and requests from YU students, Abrams and her colleagues have to sort through the applications to best match up teams and communities. "A lot of thought and sensitivity goes into it," she says.

Continues Abrams, "We look at the communities who signed up and the people who have applied and we see where everybody fits best and where their talents will best be used. Some years we had nights where we had to stay at the office till 1:00." Laughing, Abrams points out that "we have since figured out a system where we don't have to stay up so late."

Occasionally, there will be a team that lacks chemistry or doesn't completely click with the host community, but, as Abrams points out, "this is usually not the norm."

Despite the many hours it takes to put the teams together and the complaints that are sometimes received from students disappointed with their placement (most students consider communities in the tri-state area less exotic and desirable than communities outside of it), Abrams says that the positive feedback from both the communities and the students makes it all worth it and motivates her to keep running



# NEWS

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the program.

"I get e-mails from communities saying that 'we've never had dancing like we had this holiday' or 'your students made our holiday.' There also are students who will say 'we're already planning to go back.'" According to Abrams, a team this year connected so well with its host community that team members are planning to make their own travel arrangements to go back for winter break.

Though Abrams has received requests to send groups for Shabbosim, she explains that she doesn't have the staff right now to quite so drastically expand the program.

SCW student Sarah Robinson went to Congregation Beth Israel in Malden, Massachusetts for Torah Tours this year. Comments Sarah, "I've done Torah Tours three times because it is the most meaningful way I can spend Chag."



## President Joel Pilots Google Glass

**Chana Miller** Google Glass, a cutting-edge piece of wearable computer technology engineered by Google and set to debut in 2014, is currently being piloted by Yeshiva University's President Richard Joel. After applying to the program through Twitter, President Joel became one of the approximately 10,000 members of the pilot program and the only university president currently testing the Glass.

What makes Google Glass so unique? Essentially it is a smart-phone in the form of an eyepiece, which, through innovative voice-activation technology, enables users to record videos, take pictures, upload content to social media, and send messages—all completely hands-free. Speak to it, and through voice-recognition, it can execute commands and project data, including texts, emails, maps, and websites, into the user's field of vision.

Google Glass looks no different than a regular pair of glasses, but costs about \$1500. (The only distinction is the small glass module on one side corner.) The Glass comes in various colors and can even operate in direct sunlight.

Because of the Glasses's complexity, Google offers "how-to" videos to help members of the pilot program such as President Joel navigate the

new technology. According to Noey Jacobson, manager of Presidential Communications and Public Affairs at Yeshiva University, Google Glass "is daunting at first, but actually extremely intuitive. The primary way of operating the glass is to speak to it. For instance, you can say, "Okay Glass! Take a picture!"; or "Okay Glass, Google kosher restaurants in Teaneck, NJ."

President Joel's involvement in the pilot program will come as no surprise to most YU students, for he uses the Glass extensively in his role as University President. For example, President Joel will often wear the Glass while teaching class or walking around campus. Though he originally hoped to wear the Glass to last year's Commencement ceremony, it did not arrive until the start of this academic school year, and instead made its debut on the Beren Campus during orientation, when President Joel addressed the incoming students while wearing the Glass.

On a recent trip he took to build up ties between Yeshiva University and the South African Jewish community, President Joel used the Glass to take pictures of the landscapes and the people he met in South Africa.

President Joel's decision to pioneer the

new Google Glass technology can be seen as a reflection of his broader vision for the role of Yeshiva University in the 21st Century: "We remain rooted in our tradition and heritage, and yet we seek to engage with the best that modern culture and technology has to offer, always

remembering that we must lead technology, and not let technology lead us." Adds President Joel, "It's astounding to think that the future of technology is probably in wearable electronics."

Yeshiva University





## Eighth Annual Medical Ethics Conference Offers Multifaceted Look at Israeli Medicine

**Talia Felman** On Sunday, October 20th, over one-hundred students, professors, doctors and curious guests gathered in Furst Hall to learn about Israel's healthcare system at the eighth annual Fuld Family Medical Ethics conference titled "Prescribing for a Nation: Examining the Interplay of Israel Health Care and Jewish Law."

The event was co-sponsored by the YU Student Medical Ethics Society and featured speakers from both America and Israel. The objective of the conference, according to Kalman Laufer, YC '17, co-President of the Medical Ethics Society, was "to better understand Israel's incorporation of Jewish values into real life medical decisions, and its position as a country in responding to both domestic and international crises."

The morning opened with a keynote address delivered by Professor Jonathan Halevy, the director of Shaare Zedek Medical Center. Dr. Halevy initiated a dynamic discussion about how Israel's legal system encodes Jewish values into its healthcare laws. He emphasized Israel's patient rights act and right to die with dignity clause, two laws that respect both religious and secular interests, an accomplishment he called "the victory of multiculturalism" in a diverse country. Dr. Halevy stressed that while "no country can give its citizens all [modern medicine] has to offer," he is "proud of the Israeli basket of services."

Following a brief break, Dr. Halevy, along with Rabbi Willig of RIETS and Rabbi Brander of the CJF, presented a thorough and technical discussion about unique halachik challenges that doctors in Israel face. After the halachik analyses of the medical issues, Dr. Halevy illustrated how Israel's engagement with the medical challenges aligns with halachik criteria.



**Shimone Fried**

Chief among the issues discussed was the use of PGD (pre-implantation genetic diagnosis) for sex selection, which Israel permits on a case-by-case basis and only when paired with psychological evaluation. Other topics included in vitro fertilization, oocyte cyro-preservation, abortion, organ donation and end of life issues.

The last of the morning's three presentations centered on Israel's medical response to crisis. Dr. Frogel, President-elect of American Physicians and Friends for Medicine in Israel, outlined the extensive preparations Israeli response teams undertake to protect against bombs, chemical weapons, and earthquakes, such as installing shrapnel proof windows and building underground hospitals.

Yitzchak Shalita, a member of Zaka, an Israeli emergency response team, proceeded to describe how Zaka goes about ensuring that "every drop of blood, every body part [is]

buried," as a way of showing utmost respect to the victims of an attack.

Finally, Dr. Schwaber recounted his experiences directing a field hospital in Haiti in the wake of the 2010 earthquake. Dr. Schwaber related that upon meeting a Haitian in Boston the following year and informing him that he had been in Haiti after the earthquake, the Haitian responded, "Are you from Israel? Everyone knows that Israel was the first to respond after the earthquake!"

After a quick lunch in Belfer Hall, the attendees had the choice of attending five different breakout sessions given by some of the morning's speakers. Additional speakers at the conference included Rabbi Blau of RIETS, Rabbi Zvi Gluck, chief executive officer of Zaka, Mark Kurzman, Former Justice Department national security litigator, Rabbi Dovid Fuld, a conference sponsor, and Benjamin Courchia,

an alumnus of Yeshiva University who attended Medical School in Be'er Sheva. The breakout session topics ranged from solutions to infertility in Israel to the challenges faced by American-educated physicians in navigating Israeli medicine.

Throughout the day, the conference illustrated how medicine, often mistaken for a dry science, can actually give rise to a very colorful and complex array of philosophical, legal and religious questions. Talia Atlas, SCW '15 especially appreciated the conference's religious angle. For Atlas, hearing Dr. Schwaber discuss his involvement in Haiti was very different that just hearing stories in the news of Jewish heroes who sanctify G-d's name. "I felt proud listening to Dr. Schwaber talk," she remarked.

Other students appreciated the conference's holistic look at Israel's health care system, especially its focus on how Israel contributes to the welfare of countries beyond its borders. For Elianne Neumann, SCW '15 and secretary of the Medical Ethics Society, the conference "not only explained the complexities of Israel's domestic healthcare system, but also illuminated the incredible efforts of both the Israeli government and Non-For-Profit organizations in promoting disaster relief and rescue work all over the world."

After the event, Chani Herzog, SCW '14, co-President of the Medical Ethics Society, poignantly summed up the conference as a reminder of "our devotion to the land of Israel, our responsibility to excellence as Jewish medical practitioners, and our commitment to the Jewish people as a whole."

## Town Hall Meeting: Do You Trust YU's Integrity?

*Continued from page 1*

students. This question resulted from the student having personally witnessed a security guard improperly helping a student with physical disabilities. President Joel assured the students that security is trained in health and emergency procedures and that sometimes in the spur of the moment people make mistakes. He directed his attention to the heads of security to follow up on this issue.

Next, Gaby Elkaim (SCW '14) expressed her frustrations with Academic Advisement and called them "incompetent." Her word choice received a shocked response from the crowd. She explained that since she began her career in Stern it has been extremely difficult to plan and determine which classes she needed in order to fulfill her requirements due to the ambiguity of the core and major requirements. President Joel defended the academic advisors and said that it is simply not the case that they are incompetent. He conceded that that the confusing and enigmatic requirements need to be reviewed and simplified. He suggested speaking with the advisors, Dean Orlian, or his

**Irit Greenboim**



newly born granddaughter.

Moving in a completely different direction, Tal Meiri (SCW '14), who is a fellow at Drisha Institute for Education, said that she has noticed many YU students participating in Drisha programming. She was curious to know if the President thought that this was a result of something lacking in the Judaic Studies curriculum at YU. After pressing Meiri to define what this lack might be, President Joel told Meiri that there were many opportunities to learn less "mainstream ideas" and that it is TAC's job to provide the community with more opportunities if there were not enough. Shout-outs were given to TEIQU, the women's Beit Midrash, and GPATS.

President Joel was then confronted with a round of questions referring to various headlines recently associated with YU. The first came from The Observer Editor-In Chief, Hannah Dreyfus (SCW '14), who referred back to President Joel's earlier announcement and pressed the President to elucidate what Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks's involvement would be with the Beren campus. Joel answered that they only have plans through this spring, though he guaranteed that Rabbi Sacks would have equal exposure to both campuses. He then turned to Deputy Chief of Staff, Daniel Gordon, who disclosed that the plan is for Rabbi Sacks to spend Shabbat and give lectures at Stern. They are currently trying to determine what his three-year plan will be.

Vaguely referring to an incident that occurred earlier this semester regarding the possibility of a student's scholarship being revoked, Adena Kleiner (SCW '14) asked the President to clarify the relationship between a student's personal life choices and their merit and/or need-based scholarships. President Joel staunchly spelled out that there is no connection between need-

based scholarships and performance, other than school achievements or gross violations of school values and rules. The scholarship in question was not a need-based scholarship. He maintained that it was the right decision to return the young woman her scholarship. Joel did express the notion, however, "That if you're a student at Stern College, willy nilly, you're an ambassador for us... We invest in you and have a responsibility to live by the boundaries of those people who give us the money to do so."

The next round of questions went back to the subject of academics and credits. Ariella Kossin (SCW '14), the Stage Manager for SCDS, wanted to know why she could not receive credit for her hard work as a stage manager, while her male counterparts uptown received credit. President Joel commiserated and said that he did not know why this was the case. He suggested that she try to speak to Dean Orlian one more time, and to follow up with President Joel personally.

The next question regarded why students in SCW could not take Syms courses for credit unless they were officially majoring or minoring in that subject in Syms. President Joel agreed that it was not a seamless process and that from an academic stand point, there should be maximum interchange between the two schools. He explained that the same debate is occurring uptown and that an effort is being made to resolve the issue.

Hadassah Tirschwell (SCW '15), an RA, expressed some new ideas to improve the out-of town experience. Some of the difficulties out-of town students and their parents face include: summer storage, move-in on weekdays, etc. President Joel answered very simply that the Office of Student Life and the Office of University Housing and Residence Life would try to be more sensitive to their needs without incurring more costs.

Dreyfus returned to some more sensitive



**Irit Greenboim**

subjects and asked President Joel to comment on the university's credit rating going down and what the plans are to improve this situation. Joel first stated that he and his team are working on "re-imagining the university." He explained that the issue is when you look university-wide, there is clearly more spending of money than generating of money. This is a result of the fact that the model of education in YU is a mission-driven mode, which is not a sustainable and structural model. However, he and his trustees are transitioning to a more "sustainable model." "This will require tough choice, change, and inventing differently," said the President. The new speech pathology and audiology school is an example of programs intended to generate significant revenue.

President Joel then expressed his surprise that Dreyfus' question was not about the recent hiring and firing of a certain faculty member who had a history of sexual misconduct. He opened his final monologue by admitting that a mistake was made. He clarified that every employee has a background check, all faculty hires go to the provost office, and that this was a last-minute hire. The background check came in and sat on a desk for a little too long.

In a very poignant end to the meeting, President Joel posed a question to the student body: "At the end of the day, do you trust the integrity of this university or not?"



# RUNNING HAND IN HAND FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION

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**Michal Cohen** Throughout history, people have stood up for what they believe in. These people have not necessarily been always powerful people and influential figures—they were regular men and women, kids and teenagers, who one day decided to take a stand against injustice. Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani girl who was shot by the Taliban for raising her voice to promote women's education, has joined this elite cadre. At just sixteen years of age, she has made a bigger impact on the world than most people have who are years older. Her passion for education led her to fight for the freedom of securing it, even under the threat of the Taliban. Instead of watching from the sidelines, she took action and voiced her opinion, spreading her views across the world. Her strong views on education were influenced

## Making an Impact: Malala Yousafzai

by her father, who started a private girl's school in Swat.

In the Swat valley in Pakistan, the Taliban has banned women's education, brutally punishing anyone who defies them. The Taliban has blown up hundreds of girls' schools to send the message that educating girls is against the law. In 2009, Malala started a blog about her life under Taliban rule and her thoughts on girls' education. A year later, she starred in a documentary by the New York Times about the death threats she was receiving in Swat. In October 2012, Taliban members boarded her school bus and shot her in the head, shooting two of her friends as well. Malala spent days fighting for her life and miraculously survived.

The bravery of one young girl has inspired people across the world, including fellow Pakistani girls who are now telling their stories about staying in school.

Malala has won numerous awards for her bravery and for her role as an advocate for girls' rights to education. When she spoke at the UN on July 12 earlier this year, she told the people that the Taliban had tried to silence her

and instill fear in her and others, but instead of killing her, the Taliban killed weakness and fear, enabling strength, power, and courage to be born instead. More people have come forward to fight for education rights and have told their stories about life under Taliban rule. Malala may not have expected such a positive reaction to her activism, but through her courage, she has created a butterfly effect. Once a young girl who

was not known outside her family and friends, Malala has become an international icon for hope and bravery.

Even though she is sixteen now and was even younger at the time she started her activism, she has fought and continues to fight for what she believes in in the face of incredible danger.



## Put on Your Yarmulke, It's Time for... Thanksgivukkah?

*Continued from page 1*

brand commonly associated with its kosher-for-Passover goods that occupy shelves year round, has taken full advantage of Thanksgivukkah. Both Hanukkah and Thanksgiving are family-oriented holidays that would be incomplete without their traditional meals. Manischewitz's website has been revamped for Thanksgivukkah with a festive menorkey on the home page. The company is offering a new ready-to-serve Turkey broth this year, and there is even an online forum where Jewish-American foodies can swap recipes such as cranberry latkes and turkey pastrami matzah ball soup.

With all of the novelty surrounding Thanksgivukkah, one might wonder why it didn't experience this form of popularity back

in 1888. Compared to the enthusiasm for the holiday clash this year, a simple headline of "Gobble Tov" is, quite frankly, pathetic. The Thanksgivukkah buzz started with a Facebook group and continued with hashtags on Twitter leading up to its climax around October. While widespread editorials have attempted to cover the anticipation, social media is really what has elevated the holiday cheer to its maximum jubilation. The ability to create online communities for swapping recipes fosters excitement in families across the entire nation and is more influential than any newspaper article. Similarly, the creative opportunities available to entrepreneurs of all ages are only possible because of the electric speed of online markets.



This idea of a holiday mashup in America isn't unheard of—people are inclined to combine Christmas and Hanukkah ("Chrimukkah") no matter what the dates of the two celebrations may be. Many freely associate the two celebrations because Hanukkah usually occurs in December and each festival includes gift exchanges and family gatherings. But in reality, how many Jews, except for those in religiously blended families, are actually celebrating both Hanukkah and Christmas? Thanksgiving is a holiday more often celebrated by Christians and Jews alike because it is an American tradition. It unites our country in an expression of gratitude for our rights as Americans. Thanksgivukkah, then, more readily depicts the position of a present day Jewish American than any other possible combination. As a Jew in America, one can be thankful that displaying a menorkey in the window on Thanksgiving is safe and accepted.

## Hurricane Sandy One Year Later: Reflections and Recap of Stern's Response

**Yaelle Lasson** Superstorm Sandy took most by surprise; many do not remember it even knocking on the door. When Sandy stormed in, the Stern community responded immediately by helping out: providing assistance during and immediately after the storm, and still today, one year later.

Our institution prides itself on "enabling and ennobling." It is important to recall the diverse ways that the Stern community handled the hurricane both on and off our campus that exemplified our mantra and values.

While many in the YU community were unsure of their own prospects, they did not hesitate in venturing out to help others during the storm. 600 students, faculty, and alumni assisted larger organizations like Masbia, Achiezer, Nechama, and Red Hook Relief, by cleaning out synagogues, removing debris, and distributing meals only hours following the storm. The response for participation was overwhelming.

Students at Yeshiva and Stern College also put together their own "homemade" relief efforts and ventured to downtown New York City to provide supplies and assistance to the many and any in need. Many students met with elderly residents who were homebound and unable to receive supplies had the students not provided them. The students most notably brought water and flashlights, but provided much-needed emotional support as well.

The Office of Housing and Residence Life stepped up to the plate as well, keeping all students stuck in Midtown up to date with constant emails and support. They preemptively answered questions that would arise regarding electricity, travel safety, and midterms/class reschedules. The students felt most loved when the dorm lounges were consistently stocked with (free!) Carlos and Gabby's, Eden Wok, Danishes, and glow sticks. Students were never bored as the dorm turned into a quasi-summer camp with activities like ice cream-sundae-making, karaoke in the lounge, and movie and

spa nights. When the campus was forced to evacuate, the Housing Office assured students that they would not be left in the dark.

Many nostalgically look back on the "Sandy Shabbaton" at the Wilf campus as a small taste of what a co-ed campus could look like. It was obviously speculated that YUConnects played a role in shuttling hundreds of Stern girls uptown for the extended weekend as names like "matchmaker" were thrown around to describe the storm. In all seriousness, the shabbaton reflected the quick and out-of-the-box thinking of the Housing Offices on both campuses and the hospitality of many who live in the WashHi community.

The annual YU Sefarim Sale took place during its regularly scheduled phase, January to March, which was also on the heels of Hurricane Sandy. It was impossible for the largest Jewish book sale in North America to ignore the dozens of shuls and institutions in the New York area that lost several thousand books in the storm. The Sefarim Sale staff launched the Sefarim4Sandy campaign, which would award one institution with \$10,000 in sefarim and books to the winner of a Facebook vote. With 1400 online votes, the Young Israel of Oceanside, who lost 3 Torah scrolls and thousands of sefarim, was awarded the prize. They shul chose to share the earnings among the other six contest competitors.

The relief continued well beyond the immediate aftermath of the storm. YU's Center for the Jewish Future has always provided students with volunteer and experiential opportunities during the summer session and added a Sandy Relief effort to the list of missions for Summer 2013. Co-sponsored by Nechama Disaster Relief, students rebuilt area institutions, worked with Masbia Soup Kitchens, and met with businesses and congregations who were still recovering from the storm months later.

Hurricane Sandy proved how the YU and Stern community continuously exemplify volunteerism at its best.



## #ShareTheSuccess

**Yaelle Lasson** Here, Facebook during class is the goal, not a distraction.

The Social Media course at Stern College, listed under English Media Studies courses, looks more like an internship program or a tech startup than a typical college level English course. Walking into the classroom, students are sitting in small groups updating Twitter feeds, constructing emails to some of the best media outlets, and watching numerous YouTube clips in succession. "Hey," asks a student, "weren't we supposed to go hang out in the Tumblr office today?"

The goal of the course is not, of course, just to mindlessly post GIFs of kittens and become the next BuzzFeed, but to enhance the understanding as to how social media works as a science. In addition to seeing how influential it has become in our lives today, we're learning the actual skillsets needed for social media to set forth a successful online campaign.

Professor Rob Longert teaches the course; a digital and social media professional, Longert has held many positions in various media and PR agencies in addition to teaching at Stern. He has been the Senior Account Executive at PepperCom, Director of Digital Strategy and Vice President at M Booth, and Co-Founder and Partner at a recent startup communications agency. He came to the Stern English Department in Fall 2012 after guest lecturing in Professor Deborah Brown's Public Relations class.

While academically studying the history and inner workings of social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube, the class is currently amidst building their own social media campaign focused on Women and Technology. By posting in various ways on their Tumblr Blog entitled "Share the Success," the students are learning about how women contribute to the digital world in ways just as strongly as men or in their own unique and gender specific ways.

The blog topic is particularly based off Sheryl Sandberg, CEO of Facebook and recent author of the best-seller "Lean-In." Sandberg is known to be a leader of the largest social media site, as well as a wife and mother. The class originally dabbled in other icons such as Jay-Z or HBO TV, but ultimately decided that the idea of Sandberg would be the most fitting to the course and appeal to other students in Stern. When the class decided on Sandberg as the basis for their campaign, they also decided that having Sheryl come visit their class as a result of a successful campaign would be the ultimate prize and gauge that the undertaking was effective.

"We think she is a good mascot for us," says student Rena Green. "Sheryl Sandberg is really making a difference for women, not only in the tech industry, but in the business world as a whole. We're a class of women who all hope to eventually pursue professional careers." Throughout Professor Longert's professional career, he has seen great female leaders in technology. He believes that in a school full of the female leaders of tomorrow, it is important to study the habits and systems that have made Sandberg, and others like her, so successful.

As a Media Communications and Journalism major, Green has seen firsthand through her own internships how digital media, much like the skills learned in the course, is becoming the more desirable way to disseminate content and news. "More and more content is being published online and via social media than in print," she notes. "It's definitely an asset to a company when its employees understand the social market and can utilize digital content to their advantage."

The course is made up of many Communications and PR majors; however, this class is not just geared to those interested in a career solely focused on digital and social technologies. For example, Talia Stern, a junior and Biology major, is particularly interested in how media can be helpful in the medical field that she wants to pursue. She and other non-English majors are learning the tools necessary to perform

any job in this digital era. Longert says that no matter what profession his students choose to pursue, he feels strongly that social media and digital technology is the destination all businesses and companies are headed nowadays. "It is my belief that understanding the power of social media and how it can impact one-to-one and one-to-many communication will give perspective on where things are going and why," Longert says. "From reputation management to interpersonal communication, digital is changing the way we think and act as a society."

The students produce a daily blog on topics such as "Challenge Sheryl", "Social for Good", "Feature on a woman in tech that's #PoweringTomorrow", and "The Rise of the Mom Blogger." They push out the content via Twitter and Facebook and have gained many followers, including major female and tech-focused groups. Most notably, a recent video post of a poetry slam about women's roles attracted 268 notes and was reblogged by LeanIn.

The class has been pleased to see how effective their campaign has become as Share the Success has gained many followers and reached big names such as WomenWorking.com, Gloria Feldt, President of Take The Lead and author of "No Excuses: 9 Ways Women Can Change How We Think About Power," and most outstandingly, the official LeanIn organization. "I was most surprised by the vastness of our impact, and to see who was listening," said Esther Tsvaygenbaum who has devised a course of action to promote the campaign on and off the Stern campus. "Lean In is aware of our efforts and have commended us publicly for taking initiative." The class is further strategizing as to how to get top-notch professionals, such as Sandberg, into the school. "We are not just theorizing," she stresses. "With initiative comes impact, and I'm excited to see where we'll go and what we'll be able to do next."

The more internship-like side of the class is through the constant efforts that the class tackles in subcommittees. One specific group is focusing on an experiential campaign, which includes flyers around Stern highlighting various powerhouse women such as Helen Keller, J.K. Rowling, and Golda Meir. Another is trying to build up a following in the broader network of women and technology by getting their blog posts and general objective noticed. A third group is trying to work within the Stern community by utilizing the already existing clubs and councils on campus. They are currently working with the Career Center to help with mentoring and the Syms Student Council to host a series of speakers and club events.

The class is most excited about an upcoming venture entitled "SternTalks," a lecture platform modeled after the popular "TedTalks." They hope to have a diverse panel of professionals and students speak about different challenges, accomplishments, and experiences as women in technology and business.

Whether Sheryl Sandberg will actually visit the class is unknown. But the students are certainly learning many techniques as to how to achieve her success and become the next Sandberg. Whether it will be a successful female professional in the technology industry, or professional female in the digital age, Longert says that if they are, "confident, assertive, hard working and won't take no for an answer, there is no reason they won't be sitting in the board room of one of the world's biggest companies."

Share the Success has learned through their own collaborative efforts, and by liking, sharing, and following others, that sharing success is the best way to spread it. Sandberg herself has been quoted saying that, "I feel really grateful to the people who encouraged me and helped me develop. Nobody can succeed on their own."

Follow Share the Success at @ShareSuccessYU on Twitter, Share The Success on Facebook, or ShareTheSuccess.tumblr.com.

## Paving the Way: First U.S. Yoatzot Halacha Graduation

*Continued from page 1*

Rabbanit Henkin rightfully claims that "through proven need and softness of tone, Yoatzot Halachah can meet the needs of Klal Yisrael."

Due to high demand in Jewish communities across the U.S. for more Yoatzot Halachah, Nishmat chose to create a U.S. counterpart which would meet the rigorous standards and expectations of their Israeli program. Implemented in September 2011, the U.S. Yoatzot Halachah Fellows Program took off, beginning with an intensive week of study in Nishmat's Beit Midrash in Israel, and continued over the course of two years in the Ma'ayanot Beit Midrash in Teaneck, New Jersey. This year's contingent commenced with intensive exams in Israel this past summer.

The graduation ceremony featured speakers directly involved in and supportive of the mission and implementation of Nishmat's Yoetzet Program. In his opening words, Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik remarked on the appropriateness of hosting this remarkable event in Shearith Israel, the Spanish-Portuguese synagogue. As the first synagogue ever established in North America, it represents the Jewish presence in America, an apropos venue for this landmark event. With similar pride, Dr. Giti Bendheim, the Yoatzot Halacha Chair of American Friends of Nishmat, took the floor as the emcee, emphasizing the void so prominently filled by Yoatzot in the Jewish community.

The Dean of Nishmat, Rabbanit Chana Henkin, proudly emphasized this unique landmark in Jewish history, endowing the graduates before her with the noble and sacred mission to "bring dignity to women's religious lives." Echoing these words, Rabbi Reiss stressed Yoatzot's community role to nurture the wholesomeness of the Jewish family. He further emphasized that due to their accessibility, Yoatzot have answered fertility questions which have enabled many Jewish children to be born to families suffering from the pains of infertility, or confusion with Jewish law. Had these families felt uncomfortable discussing their Niddah questions with a Rabbi, these issues would not have been solved and the potential loss unfathomable.

Rabbi Auman introduced Professor Nechama Price, who opened with the ecstatic proclamation that "We are here to celebrate." As many Stern students can attest, Professor Price is impressively well-versed in the laws of Niddah. Upon entering the Beit Midrash to begin her Yoetzet Halacha studies, she was unsure if there was new material to add to her corpus of understanding. With the arrival of graduation, Price confidently states that "the learning surpassed all of her expectations." In

a personal conversation during the collation, Price expressed how much her education in Nishmat's American program has impacted her role as a professor at Stern College for Women. "I have completely reorganized the structure and material of my classes, and so many questions posed by students touch on topics addressed in Nishmat's classes and seminars." Price continued, noting that "my studies have direct influence on my conversations with students, and I have the ability now, which I did not have before, to discuss practical matters with much wider and richer perspective and knowledge."

Graduate Lisa Septimus continued the ceremony by expressing her gratitude to all involved in the program's creation and implementation, stressing the program's far-reaching achievements of infusing the Jewish community with increased Torah education and shalom bayit (peace in the home). Jeanie Schottenstein, a proud supporter and philanthropist of Nishmat, closed the ceremony, remarking that this graduation is "not a culmination, but a beginning."

Penina Cohen, a student at Stern College and a graduate of Nishmat's Post High School Program and Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School, spoke glowingly about these institutions, remarking, "I am impressed by everyone involved. These leaders look beyond what the Jewish community looks like right now, and they envision a future for the Jewish community." Rabbi Gedalya Berger, lecturer for Nishmat's U.S. Yoatzot Halachah Fellows Program and a teacher on the GPATS faculty, encourages the students of Stern and GPATS to see where their learning can bring them in the future. He commented that "for many Yoatzot Halachah, years spent in the Stern Beit Midrash were essential and transformative. Their direct impact on the *shemirat ha-mitzvot* and the marriages of hundreds of women, often in complex and personally sensitive circumstances, began with a commitment to diligent and intense Talmud Torah right here in Stern just a few years ago." Rabbi Berger's active role with Nishmat and GPATS makes him an incredible resource for women interested in expanding their Torah study to assist the Jewish community in various venues.

As Nishmat's program continues to grow and the need for more Yoatzot Halachah becomes increasingly more apparent, the opening of Nishmat's American branch is proof of Jewish leaders across the continent searching for ways to fully address the Jewish community's needs within the realm of strict Orthodox Law. Advances such as these continue to directly impact the comfort and the observance of families in the Jewish community.

<http://www.yiplainview.com/yoetzet.html>





# HEALTH CORNER

## Winter Wonder Foods

**Shlomit Kahan** As soon as you hear your heater rumbling, you know that winter has arrived. Some people get excited for the cold of winter and hope for snow to fall. Others miss the summer's warmth and want to hide under the covers while sipping hot chocolate. No matter which type of person you are, I'm sure you can agree on one thing: You would do almost anything to avoid catching a nasty cold or the flu this winter. Knowing which foods to eat and which to avoid can help you boost your immune system and avoid catching any diseases this winter. These foods can be eaten at any meal of the day, making it very easy to embark on a diet that is proactive against getting sick.

In the morning, most of us eat breakfast on the go as we rush to get to class. One good option for an on-the-go breakfast is yogurt. Yogurt contains probiotics, which can help maintain the immune system. The only catch is that not all yogurts contain "real" probiotics. Elizabeth Somer, RD, says, "Some companies make up probiotic names to put on their label." Therefore, you should make sure to check out your yogurt's ingredients to make sure that it contains real probiotics. Look for ingredients like acidophilus, Bifidus, and L. rhamnosus. These ingredients are even better when combined.

You know it's time for a snack when your stomach grumbles in the middle of class. It might as well be a healthy snack that can help boost your immune system. Scientists at Tufts University found that Vitamin E aids in the production of B cells, which are cells that make antibodies and remove unwanted bacteria. This vitamin can be found in almonds, mango, sweet potatoes, peanuts, and sunflower seeds. The Stern cafeteria usually stocks most of these foods, so instead of snacking on a cookie or muffin try some nuts or cubed mango.

Whether you go to the cafeteria for lunch or dinner, the salad bar is always packing Vitamin C. Vitamin C is an important vitamin to have because it can protect against immune system deficiencies. Remember this as you wait your turn at the salad bar: choose the broccoli, red peppers, and dark leafy greens, which all contain Vitamin C. You can also get your Vitamin D fix in the cafeteria. Vitamin D improves the immune system when in its active form. It is especially important that foods be your source of vitamin D in the winter because Vitamin D levels are lower in the winter due to less exposure of the sun, which helps our body manufacture its own Vitamin D. Vitamin D also helps your body absorb calcium, which is another important nutrient to be had in the winter months. Products containing Vitamin D are salmon, eggs, tuna, certain cereals, and dairy products.

During the winter months, it is also very important to remain hydrated throughout the day. Dr. Annette Gadagbeku, a professor at Drexel College of Medicine, says that it is important to keep hydrated during the winter months because the dryness of the cold air and the heat in our homes can cause dehydration. Dehydration can be a factor in weakening the immune system. So although it's tempting to snuggle up in bed while it's snowing with hot cocoa, beware of consuming too many sugary drinks; sugar is found to feed bacterial and viral organisms which can cause a person to become sick. So instead of making that cup of hot chocolate, make a cup of tea instead and be conscious of how much sugar you add to it.

Good decisions can prevent red noses and piles of dirty tissues. Taking these precautions in your diet during the winter can be very helpful in boosting your immune system and making it through the winter without getting sick. So, this winter, make it a point to think before you eat.

## A Reflection on the Stern Soccer Team's Fall Season

**Elana Kook** Through the blistering heat of preseason camp, to the freezing winds of the fall, the Stern College soccer team has been working tirelessly to improve their skills. Over the past two and a half months, we have been practicing every night at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Teaneck, NJ, our home field, in addition to playing in fourteen highly-competitive game tournaments. Now the soccer team has been wrapping up their season with a series of high intensity games, including a double overtime loss against York College with only two minutes left on the clock.

The work we have put into the long late-night practices has truly paid off. With only nine returning players, the team had to adjust to a new dynamic. But as the fall progressed, the new players began to shine as true assets to the team, while the returning athletes continued to improve.

Although game statistics could appear to indicate otherwise, the Lady Macs have had a season of notable achievement, including a 10-0 shut-out win against Medgar Evers College and a series of very close games against other rival teams. Striker Merav Saden-Barach has had an incredible season, leading the team with seven team goals, and a season high of twenty-four shots on goal. Additionally, she earned the prestigious title of HVIAC "Player of the Week" after scoring six goals in one week, five of which were in one game. On the defensive end, newcomer goal-keeper Annie Jaffe, has led a tremendous defensive effort, blocking 106 shots this season. Both defensive and offensive efforts have strengthened throughout the duration of the season by following our Coach's advice to "pass it up the line" on defense, while consistently "pushing it up the field" on offense.

Led by head coach Nathaniel Appel, a new team of highly-qualified coaches has driven the Stern College soccer team to push ourselves further. Before coming to Yeshiva University, Coach Appel was the coach for Dalton Preparatory School as well as the Central Park Rangers. He also had an impressive college career as a starter for Connecticut College in New London, CT.

Coach commented on his positive experience coaching for Stern and on the promising future of the soccer program at SCW: "I have been extremely excited to coach the Yeshiva University Women's Soccer Team this season. Seeing the team progress over the season and watching them improve has been extremely rewarding. I think the team, and the program, has a lot of promise and will continue to improve in the coming years."

Coach Abby Katz also joined the team this season as the assistant coach. Having played four seasons for Purchase College in Westchester, NY, Coach Abby presents the SCW team with a well-versed knowledge of successful and tactical playing. During her college career, Coach Abby made athletic history at Purchase as the top goal scorer in a single season. But her record-setting career doesn't stop there; she was also named a member of the Jewish Sports Review All-America Team by the Jewish Sports Review, the leading periodical for Jewish athletes in America. Coach Rebecca Ruck has also been a critical new asset to the team as the goal-keeping coach. She has been working the goal-keeping team hard, and their skills have sharpened tremendously due to her experienced guidance.

In addition to the new strong leadership on the coaching front, our two senior captains,

Yael Roberts and Sara Shamir, have stabilized the team with their encouragement and organization. Their relentless devotion to the team has helped create a strong sense of unity. Her fourth season on the team, Yael Roberts has played a fantastic three years as midfielder for the team. Although unfortunately out for season due to injury, "Rob" has guided the team with her helpful advice and amazed everyone with her wondrous sit-up abilities. Roberts reflected on the outcome of the hard work the team has exhibited this season: "This season was, as usual, a year of growth... It may not show on our records, but this is the most successful season I've ever had on the Lady Macs. This is an unbelievably tight-knit team that I'm sure will only go on to win incredible things in coming years."

Shamir played another consistently impressive season in center midfield. She has proven to have a powerful right and left foot shot on goal, as well as always running back just in time to help out on defense. Shamir expressed her appreciation for the team, remarking that "this fall, we have worked hard and truly come together as a team. The fall season is coming to a close, but I expect great things for the spring season, and years to come. I feel so lucky that I had the opportunity to lead the team this season. I will miss them greatly, and wish them the best!"

The Stern soccer team has pushed themselves to new limits and improved tremendously this fall season, but they know the work is far from over. They can look forward to continuing to practice during the off-season, and anticipate a successful upcoming spring season.



Shamir Sara



## Theater Talk: The Glass Menagerie

**Hannah Rozenblat** Lately, Tennessee Williams's plays have enjoyed great popularity on Broadway, to various degrees of success. In 2012, a multi-ethnic adaptation of *A Streetcar Named Desire* was staged at the Broadhurst Theater, but it failed to match the depth usually present in Williams's plays, instead overlooking much of the nuances of the play and favoring a more openly violent approach. In early 2013, an intense production of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* graced the Richard Rogers Theater, starring Scarlett Johansson and Benjamin Walker as the troubled couple dealing with marital issues and family tensions. Set in the bedroom of a Southern plantation, the show pulled viewers into the world of the desperate and determined Maggie. And most recently, a work from the later half of Williams's career, *The Two Character Play*, was revived off-Broadway over the summer at New World Stages.

*The Glass Menagerie*, one of Williams's classics, opened in September at the Booth Theater under the direction of John Tiffany. This sensitively rendered production weaves the memory-style play together delicately, reflecting the fragility of the characters. The four-character play stars Cherry Jones as the overbearing mother, Zachary Quinto as her impatient son waiting to break out of the oppressive atmosphere of his home, Celi Keenan-Bolger as the crippling shy Laura, and Brian J. Smith as the gentleman caller who pulls Laura out of her shell.

The minimalist set where the action unfolds is reduced to a dining room table, a small living room space with a few articles of furniture, and the fire escape where Tom spends many hours sitting and smoking. As the narrator, Tom sets

the tone for the play: "Everything is sentimental and not realistic," Tom explains to his captivated audience. But the characters spellbind us, until we can imagine that these are people we actually know.

Although the characters were expertly played, Laura's physical handicap often seemed a bit too forced as she limped around the stage, her foot uncomfortably turning inward with each step. While Laura is meant to be fragile, like the glass menagerie she keeps, she seemed mostly awkward and ungainly.

The play pulls at the viewer's heartstrings, and it is difficult to watch Laura's mother constantly encouraging her to be all the things she quite obviously cannot be — charming, vivacious, popular. Her mother's failure to accept her as herself seems to be what is crippling Laura emotionally, and it is only when her first gentleman caller sits down for some quality time with her during which he dispels some of her social fears that Laura's personality begins to flower.

While the Laura onstage is only a ghost of Tom's imagination years later, her story is as real and present to the viewer as it is to the Tom who is reminiscing about the family he left behind. Ultimately, this production does justice to the nuances and emotional depth of Tennessee Williams's original play. It is meaningful, direct, and emotionally engaging, providing a satisfying experience for the viewer, presented by a team of actors who are amazing at what they do.

*The Glass Menagerie is currently playing at the Booth Theater (222 West 45th Street) through February 2014. Student rush tickets are available.*

## From Pen Pal to Famous Author

**Sarah Katz** Imagine your favorite author. You read all his/her books, follow his/her life, and finally you decide to send him/her a fan letter to show how much you appreciate and admire his/her work. Now imagine your favorite author writing back to you and keeping up a correspondence with you for two years. This is exactly what happened between aspiring Canadian writer Marjorie Sheard and famed author of *The Catcher in the Rye*, J.D. Salinger, between 1941 and 1943. The letters that he wrote to Marjorie are currently on display at The Morgan Library until January 14th. Known as a private person, Salinger's letters are a unique glimpse into the personal life of one of America's famous novelists.

The exhibit features a glass case displaying letters and postcards that JD Salinger wrote to Marjorie about his new career as a short story author, along with advice Salinger gave her on how to get her stories published. The first letter he wrote to her is a thank you letter saying how much he appreciates that she read his story that was published in *Esquire Magazine*. Marjorie also sent him a story that she wrote, hoping she could get feedback from a published author. Not only did Salinger take the time to write back to her, but he also read her story, and responded that she had great potential and that she should try sending it to some magazines.

The next two letters are handwritten, perhaps implying that he felt more comfortable with her and didn't want to sound too formal. In the first letter he says that one of his short stories, "The Heart of a Token Story" had just been published in a prestigious magazine. He must have felt very comfortable with her because he then asks her to send a picture of herself to him. This is amusing because the next letter he writes to her looks more formal and he apologizes for "the giddy note I wrote you asking for a picture."

There is a beautiful picture of Marjorie in the exhibit, showing that even though he apologized to her, she must have sent it to him anyway. In another letter, he tells her about his newest short story to be published, called "Slight Rebellion off Madison" which ended up being the basis for *The Catcher in the Rye*. Marjorie was the first to be introduced to the characters in the novel and get a glimpse of this famous work. When the book was later published, one can only imagine the delight Marjorie must have felt at knowing she had seen the origin of the novel.

While in the army in the spring of 1942, Salinger corresponded with Marjorie via postcard. He shares with her how mundane army life was, and by the fall he says that he might be deployed and to imagine him "leading me little platoon over the top." He then sends her more letters from when he was in the Army Air Forces Basic Flying School. In the letters they both shared anecdotes from their romantic life and Marjorie shared that one of her stories had been rejected from *The New Yorker*. Salinger offers words of comfort, saying that she should not feel discouraged and "lose not heart."

The last thing that Salinger ever sends to her is a postcard saying his newest story, "The Varioni Brothers," has been published. It's short and formal and does not sound like his previous letters. Maybe Salinger had enough of this correspondence. Maybe he thought it was not leading him anywhere or maybe he thought he was now too famous to be a pen pal with an unknown writer. Regardless of this, he signs the letter "Wistfully, JDS."

The letters and postcards leave much to be determined about Salinger and Marjorie. Yet a true fondness is clear, and besides for that it is a rare treat to see such an intimate account of a correspondence between an author and a bel-

# ARTS & CULTURE

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## Balthus: One Fetish Too Far?

**Mia Guttmann** "Balthus: Cats and Girls," an exhibition currently on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, displays the work by the Polish-French painter known as Balthus. Balthus is a well-known figurative painter from an era where to be a modernist meant to paint in abstraction. This differentiation in style set Balthus apart from his contemporaries, but what he is infamous for is his choice of subject matter, which consists mainly of adolescent girls in provocative positions. As if the young women laying with their panties exposed was not enough, Balthus also works with the motif of cats, a clear erotic allusion.

Balthus's subject matter leaves viewers contemplating: is art bound by the same moral constructs as the individual? And should there be limitations on artistic expression? It is clear that in the case of Balthus his artwork—while provocative—did not violate any legal standards. Although he does have one blatantly erotic piece entitled "The Guitar Lesson," which is not exhibited at the Met, this is his only painting which falls into the realm of pornographic. The painting is a depiction of an older woman holding a half clothed girl across her lap, while she plays her like a guitar.

While Balthus's paintings violate what we might declare to be normative, they are meant to be an exploration of the nude. Many artists, like Balthus, used young models; one example being Egon Schiele, who was famous for sleeping with his models as well as painting them. Balthus's subject are perhaps controversial because for the most part his models are clothed. This might seem like an odd statement: if they are clothed aren't the women less provocative? Well no, for as most Jewish girls can relate, it is analogous to the laws of modesty: just because you are wearing a skirt does not mean you are abiding by the halakhic, legal obligations of modesty. The same is true in the case of Balthus; while his figures are normally dressed, their suggestive positions imply certain precarious actions.

Another reason his paintings are viewed as provocative is the contemporary context. When viewing a painting such as *Therese Dreaming*, 1938, we see a young girl in a blouse and red skirt leaning against a blue pillow, arms atop her head

and legs partially open with a cat strategically placed in the right corner. The contemporary setting and clothes associate the girl with a period close in time to our current standards. The contemporary costume and setting makes the viewer more compelled to place upon the painting their standards of morality.

While the contention of subject matter is interesting, Balthus's use of paint is banal. Balthus paints in a style that he refers to as 'timeless realism,' a style that relies on realism and harsh contours. The style itself is mild and his paintings occasionally have issues with proportion that are more disturbing to the eye than interesting. The combination of realism and lack of innovation make his paintings less compelling. While his subject matter is definitely charged, his painting methods lack the provocation necessary for a great modernist painter.

Another notable piece worth recognizing within the exhibit is *The Cat of La Méditerranée*, 1949. This piece is a showstopper for all the wrong reasons. The painting depicts a giant cat sitting to a feast of fish being delivered via rainbow from the ocean to the cat's plate. At the base of the rainbow is [of course] a topless girl in a rowboat, waving. Also, the cat-man figure in the painting is apparently supposed to represent Balthus. Confused? Well then you can join the ranks of everyone else who went to see the exhibit. Though not as provocative as many of his other paintings, *The Cat* definitely drew a crowd. One security guard approached me and asked why I liked the painting so much. I had no idea what gave him the impression that I liked the painting, but I responded that I think people were mostly astonished at how different the painting was from the general MET collection.

Perhaps that is Balthus's niche. He's different — maybe not in the right ways — but his heart seemed to have been in the right place. The exhibition of his work is eclectic to say the least and while there are no exceptional works (although there are many interesting ones), the uncomfortable laughs you will have are definitely worth the pay-what-you-want admission.





While 83% of small colleges have been dealing with a decline in both freshmen and overall enrollment\*, we here at Yeshiva University keep growing, in ways like this:

**16%**

increase in First Time on  
Campus Students since 2011

**11%**

of the student body  
are Dean's scholars

**5.9%**

increase in overall  
enrollment since 2011

**9%**

are international students

**1245**

average SAT score

**45**

States are represented  
by our student body

**21%**

of incoming students are  
honors

**10%**

of our students play  
on an NCAA team

**THANK YOU**  
FOR BEING AT THE FOREFRONT OF OUR CHANGE



Yeshiva University

\* Small baccalaureate colleges with less than 4000 students (Source: Chronicle of Higher Education, May 6, 2013)



## The Art of Spoken Word Poetry

**Aliza Chase** When high-schooler Ethan Metzger performed at the first annual Bronx Youth Poetry Slam, the video went viral. As an Orthodox Jew, he describes how a person once accused him of practicing Judaism only because his parents raised him that way, criticizing him for blindly following in the religious footsteps of his parents. They claimed he was “brainwashed.” Ethan Metzger says he agrees with them. His parents brainwashed him into being a good person with good values. As he expressed, “My father twisted my infant brain to value my integrity, and worse, he led by example,” and he’s sorry the other person’s parent didn’t do the same. He concludes by admitting that he didn’t say these thoughts, because his parents also brainwashed him not to quickly judge other people. The people in the audience snap their fingers in beat to his words.

Slam poetry, or spoken word poetry, has recently seen a comeback. Videos like Ethan’s have been posted and reposted across Facebook in the recent weeks. Friends shared how this poetry “clicked” with them or described their feelings spot-on. What is the appeal of spoken word poetry?

First of all, what is spoken word poetry? It is the synthesis of music and literature, which captures the beauty of both and unites them into a harmony of something more sublime. From the written word, it takes the structure and form of expression, the way the words flow into complete sentences and create a message. But it is the music of spoken word poetry that creates the emotional appeal. The cadence of the words gives the poem its rhythm, balance, and flow. In this way, the sentences build on each other, drawing the audience into its current.

The voice inflections harmonize with the words themselves, and it is this fusion that touches a cord with the audience. When the audience hears something they connect to, they snap to show their approval and support.

Since spoken word poetry is performed live, theoretically the audience can’t rewind or replay, so all they have is that one moment when the speaker forges the invisible into reality. In the moment that the poet speaks, the words touch souls. As spoken word poet, Sarah Kay, explained in her TED Talk, “When I meet you, in that moment, I’m no longer a part of your future, I start quickly becoming a part of your past, but in that instant I get to share your present, and you, you get to share mine, and that is the greatest present of all.”

Spoken word poetry attempts to connect the reality of the world to the reality of people.



Ethan Metzger was able to capture his experience with Orthodox Judaism, and through this he was able to connect to his audience. As Sarah Kay expressed, “They hear you, they feel exactly what you feel at the same time that you feel it. It’s what I strive for every time I open my mouth. That impossible connection.” It is more than a song; it is a conversation of people speaking frankly to one another, pouring out their souls and hoping to touch the soul of someone else.

## From YU to the PIT: a Comedian’s Journey

**Hannah Rozenblat** Eitan Levine (YC ’12), got into comedy at the age of fifteen, and hasn’t looked back since. In the past few months, his comedy career has had a few major boosts, including being promoted to a mainstage house improv team at the People’s Improv Theater (the PIT) on West 24th. The PIT, a major comedy venue that has been voted as one of the top New York venues by publications such as the Village Voice, and features improv, sketch, and standup comedy. After an audition process, people are placed on teams that are divided into underground and mainstage. Since being promoted to a mainstage house team, Levine has been performing weekly as part of the “Super Free Wednesday” system and now with a musical improv team. This year, he is also the official social media correspondent for the New York Comedy Festival. We sat down with this YU alumnus to chat about his beginnings, his creative process, and his integration of Judaism and comedy.

**Massimo di Giovanna**



**Tell us a bit about your background in comedy. How and when did you get involved?**

I started doing stand-up comedy when I was fifteen. I did my first open mic at the Stress Factory in New Brunswick and then mostly performed New Talent showcases at Rascal’s comedy club. By the time I was out of high school I was getting regular shows around NJ and a few things in NYC.

I went to Israel for the year and while I was there I won Israel’s Last Comic Standing. I came back to NYC, started college, continued doing stand-up and then started doing improv comedy. I took improv classes at UCB, switched over to the PIT (they offered me an internship), and then after about a year of classes and practice I got onto a weekly house team at the PIT. The whole improv experience has been amazing and the PIT has been an awesome place to hone my comedic voice and collaborate with like-minded and motivated comedians. Right now I am focusing on stand-up comedy, becoming more invested in the sketch comedy world, and continuing to improve my skills as an improv comic.

**What kind of work goes into creating a comedy routine?**

Improv is made up on the spot, so no real preparation goes into those shows aside from weekly rehearsals with my ensemble. Stand-up takes more work. I come up with most of my jokes just by having an inner monologue with myself. On the subway I’ll be thinking something

like “cell phone stores are funny...” and then put it through a comedic method to see if I can squeeze some kind of joke out of it. If there is a joke there then I’ll work it out, write a rough draft and then try it out at an open mic. If it works, it works. If not, I’ll either re-work it or scrap it completely. Comedy is very fickle in that I’ll be OBSESSED with a joke I come up with until it bombs repeatedly and then I’ll tell myself, “Yeah, well, I never liked that joke in the first place!”

**How does your Judaism inform your comedy, and vice versa?**

Not really at all. I think that a lot of religious Jews who do comedy tend to focus primarily on the Jewish part of their personalities and tend to use it as a crutch when it comes to joke construction. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve watched religious comics go up at shows and do twenty minutes of “Kugel... Oy VEY... chanukah... My Rabbi told my bubby...” kind of material. Don’t get me wrong, that stuff can work and there are ways to make it funny but most of the time it ends up just being lazy and uninspired. Kind of like Jewish Carlos Mencia. The way to be a religious Jew and do comedy is kind of like how Eddie Izzard does comedy. Eddie Izzard is a world famous comedian (who is also a cross-dresser) but if you ever watch his shows, the vast majority of his material is not about him being a cross-dresser. You’ll usually get a few jokes up top about his appearance but the rest of his set is usually just regular jokes. So to answer your question, yes, I do have some Jewish jokes and I am proud of my Jewish

heritage, but when it comes to comedy, I am not a Jewish comic, I am a comic who also happens to be Jewish.

**Tell us a bit more about the PIT, where you perform, and how you got onto a house team there.**

The People’s Improv Theater is a comedy theater on 24th and Park that specializes in long-form improv comedy and sketch comedy. After you take classes you are allowed to audition for house teams that perform weekly at the theater.

**What are your short-term and long-term goals in terms of comedy?**

Short-term, I plan on getting more invested in stand-up and sketch comedy. I am working on a few written shows that are happening in November and hopefully going out on tour over the next few months (hitting colleges and comedy festivals).

**And finally, where can people see you perform now?**

Every Wednesday night at 7pm on the PIT mainstage with my house team, “Classic Anne,” every other Thursday with my musical improv house team, “Moose” and semi-randomly with my sketch comedy group, Sandwich. You can also catch me on November 23rd with the sketch comedy show I produce called “2 Weeks Notice.”

Visit the PIT, located conveniently within walking distance of Stern College, to see Eitan Levine perform. And keep up with Eitan Levine on Twitter, @Eitanthegoalie.

## Defying Gravity

**Hannah Dreyfus** “Life in space is impossible.” The recent box-office phenomenon, Gravity, begins with this ominous prediction. The rest of the film, both as a work of cinematography and as a narrative in its own right, debunks this assertion. Directed by Oscar nominee Alfonso Cuarón, Gravity is the story of two astronauts stranded alone in space when their mission goes terribly wrong. Dr. Ryan Stone, played by Sandra Bullock, is a brilliant medical engineer on her first shuttle mission. Matt Kowalsky, played by George Clooney, is a veteran astronaut. After space debris torn from a Russian satellite destroys their shuttle, instantly killing the rest of the crew, Stone and Kowalsky are left severed from their shuttle and alone, floating together through endless space. Survival becomes the only goal—a chance against all odds.

Like any good thriller, viewers are left on the edge of their seats for a solid hour and a half (the film’s duration). But what set this film apart is not the impressive special effects, adroit camerawork, and masterful manipulation of the 3-D viewing experience. What makes this film unique is Cuarón’s ability to weave a personal, intimate and simple story of heroism between

the special effects. The vulnerable story of survival that pulsates at the core of this film is never overshadowed or overwhelmed by the special effects. Even while tumbling through space with our protagonists (and, thanks to the 3-D viewing experience, that does mean quite literally), viewers are never distracted from the characters’ fears and triumphs. Unlike other big-budget films of the moment, laden with noise, pop and glam, Gravity’s unencumbered plot heightens, rather than detracts, from the film’s poignancy.

In a recent interview with The New York Times, Cuarón revealed that it was his goal to create an “unadorned narrative.” In the beginning, he and his son Jonás, with whom he wrote Gravity, had no intention to create a space epic. They wanted to craft a story that focused on “one or two characters.” Setting the movie in space proved to be much more technically complicated than he ever anticipated. However, the simplicity of the idea appealed to him. “A human isolated in a cocoon far above the Earth—to me there is something profound in that,” said Cuarón.

Bullock’s performance as Dr. Ryan Stone successfully grants the film the desired note

of profundity. Aside from being a medical engineer and astronaut, Stone is a grieving mother. Viewers find out early on in the film that Stone’s young daughter died abruptly after she fell from the monkey bars and hit her head. (This is not the only instance of subtle irony within the film.) Speaking briefly about the loss to Kowalsky as they float through space, oxygen tanks running dangerously low, Bullock strikes the perfect balance of vulnerability and temerity. In a scene later on when Bullock, alone and without fuel for her space shuttle, is on the verge of suicide, the memory of her daughter pushes her to continue on. “If you see a girl with tangly brown hair up there, tell her to wait for me,” Bullock says, as she decides resolutely to keep fighting. Instead of letting the memory of her daughter’s death encourage belief in life’s futility, she uses the memory to inspire her will to live.

While sticking closely to the script of a survivor’s tale, this film is far from a happily-ever-after. Cuarón skillfully plays with viewer expectations when Kowalsky, calm and unfazed by the perilous circumstances, is lost and never found. Kowalsky detaches himself from Stone and sacrifices his own life so that she is able

to reach the space station. The unspoken hope that he will return is realized when he knocks on Stone’s space shuttle later on in the film, just after she has turned off the oxygen and is preparing to commit suicide. “How did you survive?” Stone asks Kowalsky in disbelief. “It’s a crazy story—not for now,” responds Kowalsky. Viewers are lured easily into the trap, believing that he has, in fact, returned unharmed. Viewers realize, minutes later, that he was Stone’s hallucination. Cuarón challenges the notion of the indestructible hero, to which viewers today have grown so accustomed. He instead encourages a realistic, albeit uncomfortable, recognition of sacrifice and loss, death and mortality.

Ultimately, this film is not about victory. It is a film celebrating sheer endurance, resilience and the unquenchable human will to live. The film ends with Bullock crashing through the ozone layer, swimming to shore, and finally crawling up onto dry land. As she stands and takes her first unsteady steps, the cycle of evolution seems to start again. With a new beginning, the screen goes black.



# OPINIONS

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**Sarah King** Allow me to begin by saying that I grew up in Bais Yaakov. An outsider looking in might think that English grammar is one of the last things on a Bais Yaakov's laundry list of lessons to impart to its students, right between Zionism and the latest Nicholas Sparks novel.

That outsider, however, would be mistaken.

In first grade, I was placed in a reading group—a single class devoted entirely to the lessons of writing, reading, and yes, grammar. For the next twelve years, I was taught by a cache of some of the strictest grammarians I have ever encountered, who each imparted her own lesson concerning the structure of the English language. In first grade, I learned about the silent 'e'. In third grade, I was taught the difference between "can" and "may," and was also prohibited from using the word, "yeah" (to be replaced by the proper usage, "yes"). In fourth grade, I was forcefully trained to identify "a lot" as two separate words (our teacher illustrated this to us by choosing two offending students,

## 'Alot' to Say: A Grammarian Writes Her Mind

labeling one "Mrs. A" and one "Mrs. Lot" and placing them at either end of the room, thereby demonstrating their separation). In eighth grade, I was taught about the use of contractions (or lack thereof) in formal writing. In ninth grade, comma and semicolon usage took center stage in my tutelage. This continued all the way to senior year, when our writing teacher, who only came in once a week to impart her own wisdom while reviewing our seminary (and sometimes college!) application essays and explaining why idiomatic phrases should be excluded from our formal writing.

What is my goal in presenting this rough overview of my grammatical education within the confines of a Bais Yaakov institution? It is to let you know, dear reader, that disinterest is no excuse for ignorance. After leaving my high school, I was shocked to find people my own age who came from similar backgrounds and had no idea how to use a preparatory phrase or whether to precede a dependant clause with a comma or a semicolon.

As I have stated in previous Observer articles and in many a Shabbos table-rant, our generation seems to be under the impression that rules do not matter. I am here on a seemingly quixotic mission to inform my fellow

Generation Y-ers that contrary to popular belief, rules do matter, rules have always mattered, and yes, rules always will matter. I cannot express how many times I have shaken my head in dismay and embarrassment at grammatical errors found, not only in Jewish books, but in books in general. One of my favorite high school teachers, a Hungarian-born history teacher, served as unofficial editor for some of ArtScroll's published works and would snicker to her students about how clueless some of the writers were about grammar (I, a budding grammar-freak, would listen raptly, starry-eyed). In a generation of shorthand, where "I will be right back" has been replaced by "brb" and actual laughter has been usurped by lol's, many of my peers seem to be under the impression that grammar is an archaic tool of the elderly, falling into the same general category as the typewriter and the record player: great if you have the time and inclination, but not really necessary "in our time."

Grammar is the foundation of any language. In Hebrew, grammar is called "dikduk", the root of which can be construed to mean 'detailed', 'narrow', or 'painstaking.' Grammar is not easy, folks. Especially English grammar. Why is it 'brought' instead of 'brang'? Why are 'be', 'am', and 'was' the same word in three different tenses? Nobody said that this

was going to be easy. However, if one wishes to represent oneself as a well-educated, well-spoken, well-written, and generally smart person, one must adhere to certain rules. Contrary to popular belief, there are still people in this world who care about grammar. Have you ever received a less-than-satisfactory mark on a paper? Have you ever bothered to read through the comments? If so, you may have noticed that there were grammatical correction markings—spelling, capitalization, and typos likely the most prevalent among them. Proper grammar is less about rules and minutia and more about how you present yourself to the world. Think of grammar as an outfit. If your outfit is sloppy and unkempt, this will reflect in people's perception of you. If your grammar (whether spoken or written), is atrocious people will form a similar opinion. Teachers, interviewers, and bosses are just a few of the People Who Matter who really do care if you speak or write like a novice of the language.

You can have your best-pressed blazer, your neatest run-free panty hose, and your hair in a seamless coif, but if your resume says "alot," you can kiss that job goodbye. And that, dear readers, is reason enough to follow the rules.

## Expanding the Palace of Jewry

**Jina Davidovich** I have a morning routine. I stroll past Banana Republic and engage in a solid seven seconds of window-shopping. When I walk into our office building, I say "shalom" and "boker tov" to our Israeli security guard, Itzik, and make my way to the fifth floor. After passing the words "tzedeck, tzedeck tirdof" – "justice, justice you shall pursue" – written on the wall, I walk to my desk and sit down. I open my email and prepare myself for the day ahead: a day during which I'll plan countless educational programs, study traditional and modern Jewish texts to help develop curricula with our scholar-in-residence, and perpetually consider and reconsider my future graduate plans and whether they should or should not include law school. And I will make many, many cups of coffee. Free coffee.

On October 1st, the Pew Research Center, an American think tank based in Washington D.C., released a study entitled, "A Portrait of Jewish Americans." The study uncovers many trends about the American Jewish community – synagogue affiliation, the critical importance of a Jewish sense of humor, and Jewish pride – and finds that 22% of Jews are what Pew calls "Jews of no religion." That is to say, Jews who consider themselves Jewish by ethnicity or culture, but identify as agnostic, atheist, or simply not Jewish. On 59th and Lexington, at the offices of UJA-Federation of New York, my coworkers and I were abuzz with the news of this study. We clicked back and forth between our emails and the study's data, putting our ears to this new information in order to hear the pulse of Jewish America. Every one of these professionals, from the planners to the fundraisers to the executives, is deeply concerned with the state of the entire

Jewish people – in America and around the world.

I highlight these two experiences – my morning routine and my office's experience of the Pew study – because it is through these two lenses that I wish to reflect upon my Stern experience. Once upon my teenage years, I was an eighteen-year-old woman who sent in a deposit to study creative writing at Eugene Lang, the New School for Liberal Arts. Then, bewitched and transfixed by my experience spending long hours in the *beit midrash* during my year in seminary, I told Eugene that he didn't have what I was looking for and sent in a new deposit, to Stern College for Women. There, I would have the opportunity to continue studying religious texts and feel the warm embrace of a community of women who, like me, were passionate about Torah – both in practice and in study. When asked "Why Stern?" I found myself repeating a sound byte that I had carefully crafted for the curious: I applied to college as a writer, but I came to Stern as a whole person, interested in cultivating my role as participant and leader in the Jewish community.

And I did just that. I studied *Paradise Lost* and Malbim, Picasso and *Shir Hashirim*. I wrote articles for all the newspapers – both the *Commentator* and *Observer* – and composed my first piece of spoken word poetry for a V-Day celebration held in secret in the 35th Street dorm (if you've never heard of V-Day, please Google it). I spent a summer in Dimona, teaching English and learning about the world. I fell for feminism and Wittgenstein, tutored more students in the Writing Center than I can count, and accomplished one of my adolescent goals when I assumed the position of Secretary

General at Model UN. But, most importantly, I was humbled. Humbled by the women around me. Women who were equally committed to their orgo test and planning events for the Women's Studies Society. Women who sat into the wee hours of the night and discussed how we could change the world. Female teachers and administrators who told me I could do anything. These were not the "stereotypical Stern girls" that haunt Yeshiva University lore, they were smart, strong, and talented women. Women who were not simply the greatest women I have met, but the greatest people.

The lessons that I learned from these women, the unnamed benefactors of my resume, enable me to excel in my work. They did not only give me tangible knowledge and skills that enable me to be a successful Jewish Communal professional, but charged me with an unbelievable task: greatness. In exchange for their encouragement and aid, I signed an unspoken agreement that I would become a beacon of change, leaving the world better than how I had found it. It is upon me to seek equality for women, champion education, protect the values and religious beliefs that are central to my faith, and fight relentlessly against those who seek to threaten justice and kindness in the world. The very words that I read every morning – *justice, justice you shall pursue* – are engraved on the yolk that my fellow leaders and mentors put on my shoulders at Stern. Make no mistake about it, once you become a leader, particularly in an environment like Stern, you are changed forever, and complacency and passivity are eradicated from your vocabulary. I am now obligated, by both tradition and experience, to be a leader – in the Jewish community and

beyond. And to tell you the truth, I wouldn't have it any other way.

There are some things about my Stern career, however, that I wish I could have experienced in a different way. This is where the Pew study becomes relevant. In an environment like Yeshiva University, tunnel vision when relating to the Jewish community is an all-too-pervasive epidemic. When we say "Jewish," we don't mean an individual who considers him/herself a member of the Jewish people, we mean "Orthodox Jews who practice traditional Judaism." In short, as a comedian I once heard so succinctly expressed: on the totem pole of Judaism, everyone above us is "crazy" and everyone below us is "not really a Jew."

Herein lies the problem. Just as an individual Jew cannot exist as an island – for whom will he bicker and argue with – the Modern Orthodox community cannot exist as an island, ignoring the other denominations and groups of Jews who are equally committed to and passionate about their Judaism; Jews who could teach us quite a bit about the faith that we claim to know like the back of our hands. On October 2nd, the day after the Pew survey was released, MK Dr. Ruth Calderon, whose inaugural address in the Knesset went viral on YouTube, spoke at UJA-Federation about the importance of Jewish tradition and Jewish text being the property of all Jews, not only the Orthodox. "You must come out of the gated communities that we live in. We live in silos," she said, referring to the separation between Jews of different denominations and American and Israeli Jews. Calderon's plea seemed almost immediately addressed on October 6th during

*Continued on page 16*



## It's My Time: A Reconsideration of Internet Browsing in Class

**Chaya Kanarfogel** Let me guess. You're reading this article right now on your laptop. In the middle of class. Without a clue as to what's happening around you.

This is definitely not uncommon in Stern. Unless a professor specifically says that using technology during class for outside purposes may result in a grade reduction, many people do not hesitate to use their technology quite freely, including Internet browsing on laptops and texting on cell phones.

Maybe the teacher is speaking right now and you are so disinterested, bored, or tired that you cannot bring yourself to pay attention. Maybe someone in the class asked a question that you knew wouldn't be essential to understanding what you'll be tested on, so you decided to take a break. Maybe you have an e-mail that you had been planning to send really quickly, and you just happened to notice an e-mail about the new issue of the *Observer* and found yourself browsing through all the articles. So now instead of sending that "superfast" e-mail, your mind has been pre-occupied for ten minutes.

And let me guess again. When you cue back into class after reading this, your mind won't be able to focus on the class. Inevitably, you will find yourself on the Internet once again, sending e-mails, checking Facebook,

and skimming posts on BuzzFeed, Gawker, or whatever kind of entertainment/news source you might choose.

I have had the same experience in class and know exactly how it feels. You feel that your time is being wasted by others, so you take matters into your own hands.

I completely agree. It's just a matter of what you decide is worth spending your time on.

When I first started college, older siblings and friends told me not to let my college experience go to waste. Even people who said that they hated college admitted to regretting not taking advantage of that educational opportunities when they had the chance. I was recently thinking about these pieces of advice when all of a sudden, I was struck by a crazy thought. When I look back on my college experience, I want to think: "Wow, what an amazing opportunity I had to feel intellectually stimulated in academic areas that interested me." Not: "Wow, what an amazing time I had surfing the Internet all day long." It is not worth our time to waste the privilege we have been given (or earned) to go to college. We spend enough time using technology throughout the day. Setting aside Internet-free time when we are in the classroom will not create a void in our lives.

There is no way, however, that I could go cold turkey on Internet use during class simply after realizing that it might be interfering with my meaningful college experience. For one week of classes, I attempted to see what would happen if I simply did not use my laptop for anything other than note-taking or other class-related purposes. What I found was quite reassuring when it came to my hypothesis about the distraction of the Internet. My classes became more enjoyable and my participation started escalating, which teachers visibly noticed and appreciated. Even classes that had felt consistently "dry" became much more bearable. I had once thought that tuning out would help cure my boredom during class. But instead of g-chatting a friend and saying that I was bored out of my mind, I was able to focus on what the professor was saying and actually gain something from the class. I was happier and so were my professors.

That is another primary issue that contributes to the greater problem of using the Internet during class. It is one thing to say that you don't care about enjoying your classes or making the teacher happy, but there should be a general awareness that when people are distracted and not participative, it hurts the class (and invariably the university) as a whole. Seeing classmates overtaken by their technology

distracts others and encourages an atmosphere of Internet preoccupation. Classrooms filled with distracted students prevent potential discussions or questions on the material. It creates a feeling of boredom and lack of seriousness toward the subject and the professor. It is no wonder that last year the Stern College English department instituted a no-laptop policy in its classes, which are heavily discussion-based. However, even non-discussion-based lectures still require the engagement of the students. Professors will usually ask questions, as will students. It is unfair to professors to deny them the respect they deserve and the ability to ascertain if the way they teach is effective.

At the end of the day, it is our time and we decide how to spend it. I would like to encourage a basic awareness so we can create a more serious learning community. Hopefully, that will lead to happier professors, more satisfied students, and a more engaging and studious place of learning. If you, like me, have fallen prey to the addictive nature of Internet surfing during class, I challenge you to just try for one day to see what happens if you keep your browser closed. I promise that the rest of this issue of the *Observer* will be here after class—you can read it then.

## The Great Debate: Passion vs. Practicality

**Elana Kook** The other week I was walking down Lexington Avenue and witnessed the following scene: a child stood with trepidation in front of an adult. She shyly shifted from one foot to the other as the woman asked one harmless, yet infamous question: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Her face instantly brightened as she excitedly rambled of her dreams to be an actress on television.

Yes, I admit it. I am jealous. I too, once upon a time, wished I could be on Broadway. However, her innocent response is not my point of contention. I am envious of her boundless dreams and her naiveté. When we are young, we are encouraged to dream. We are told that if we really believe, and if we really set our mind to something, then life can present endless potential. Our imaginations are free to wander boundlessly. As children, our future is presented in front of us as an empty canvas. We may paint the canvas any color we choose, we may paint outside the lines, and our creativity is lauded. No restrictions. No inhibitions.

Although I have shifted from my ambitions to be on Broadway, I find that this juncture of my life is filled with uncertainty and excitement. Unlike a small child, the matters of my future are directly in my hands. In Stern, I have the resources and abilities to actualize my professional aspirations, whatever they may be. Every door seems to be wide open and beckon me to venture into a world that once seemed distant. I can turn any dream into a reality.

However, I currently find myself in limbo. Upon entering college, I hoped that my professional plans would fall into place, that I would be in an encouraging environment that fosters my intellectual passions and future

goals. I am quickly learning that although the institution itself is supportive, I am at odds with the overall communal sentiment regarding careers. Every day I enter the revolving glass doors of Stern to a place of boundless opportunities, but I am plagued by one word: practicality.

I am quickly learning to maneuver through a world of paradox. The idealist in me struggles to break free and pursue whatever my heart desires. I want every opportunity to be available. Yet, this concept of practicality follows me wherever I go. Aside from already feeling in the minority amongst the throngs of health-related majors, I am under the impression that everyone has an immediate plan for after they graduate. And that plan points in the direction of a career that seems to perfectly accommodate the working woman with a family... and of course, is completely practical.

When people confront me regarding my major and career ambitions (as if the two were synonymous), I now know to expect the same pity-filled glance. I receive the same tireless and presumptuous responses. "So, what do English or History majors actually do after college?"

"Law school may be a viable option for you. But you know, lawyers work such late hours..."

"You plan on having a family and a full time career? Well, that seems like a stretch."

Currently, I am majoring in English Literature, with a possible double major in History. These both may seem like impractical majors, as they do not seem to develop vocational skills that directly correspond to a given career. However, my decision to study these subjects stems from my genuine interest in literature, passion for writing, and fascination

of studying the unfolding of historical events. I am using my college experience to foster my intellectual interests. I have possible options for career interests that may, or may not, utilize any of these passions. I view my college experience as an opportunity to take advantage of the academic resources available. I am not ignoring the importance of finding a career post-college, but the career I choose should correspond with my interests. So, whether I ultimately decide to go to law school, explore the world of academia, or even public relations, my academic interests will define the career choices I make, rather than allowing my future career to dictate my current interests.

Despite avidly believing in pursuing what makes me happy, a part of me is still conflicted. I do want both. I want a life in which I have a fulfilling career and can be at home to care for my family. To be honest, a part of me is slightly envious of the girls who desire to pursue such flexible careers. But, unfortunately enough, my academic interests and career ambitions do not seem to lead me to that desired lifestyle. I now ask myself the age-old question: must the two conflict? Are both attainable goals?

The ideal answer lies within the mindset of our societies. Our communities have an outdated mentality regarding what is a practical and proper lifestyle for a Jewish woman. And moreover, that mentality is a narrow approach, without much leeway for many other fulfilling careers. By choosing to pursue an "impractical career", or even a seemingly "impractical major", I am choosing, according to many, to neglect certain responsibilities I presumably have as an Orthodox woman. It creates an automatic assumption that my priorities are skewed and

unconventional.

Although I do believe that having time to stay at home is indefinitely valuable, there needs to be a greater recognition amongst our communities in the value of pursuing other fulfilling careers. Like the homes we build, the career choices we make are a significant indicator of our interests, principles, and overall identities. Since a career is a major aspect of our everyday future lives, should we not be encouraged to pursue our interests? Even if it leads to impracticality, striving to achieve happiness in the defining areas of my life is at the top of my priority list.

As I stated earlier, perhaps my mindset is naïve. Maybe in ten years from now I will look back at this article and think about how my twenty-year-old self had no clue what constitutes a fulfilling life. But as for the present, I can only hope that our communities come to a more broadened and accepting point of view.

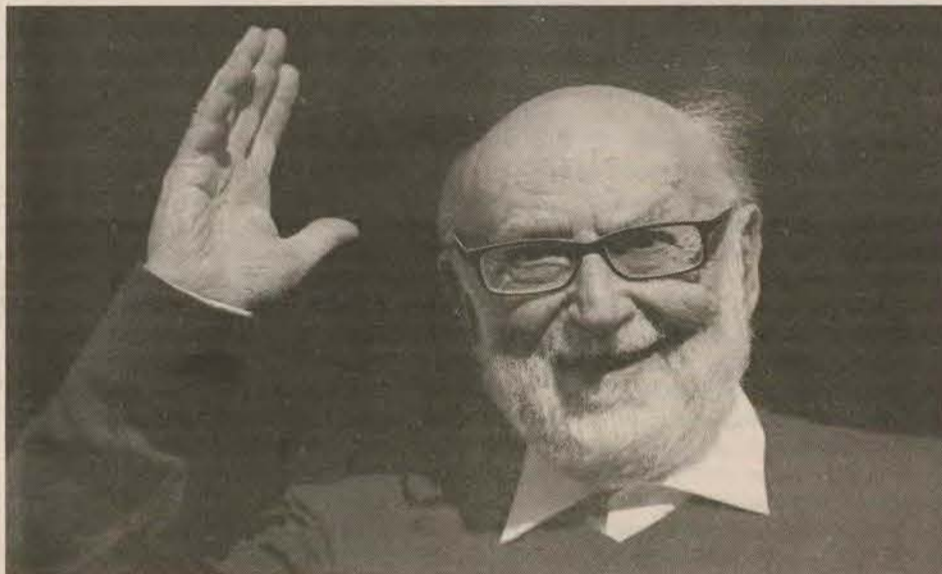
Perhaps asking for a communal shift in mindset is indeed too much of an idealistic wish. In that case, the answer lies in a totally different, yet slightly more difficult approach: I need to change my personal outlook. As difficult as it may be, I need to find the encouragement to pursue my own interests elsewhere. The initiative needs to start with the self-confidence in my choices. As hard as it is to veer from a community standard, there is a lot to be gained from making decisions for my own good. The decisions ultimately stand stronger and will make me happiest if the choice is made solely for myself. All I have to do is find that inner strength in me... which is easier said than done.



# SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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## Holocaust Survivor Wins Nobel Prize in Physics



**Tamar Levy** On October 8, 2013, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences granted the Nobel Prize in Physics to Francois Englert and Peter Higgs for their theory on how particles obtain mass. Englert and Higgs were able to solidify their theory in 2012, with the discovery of the Higgs particle (Higgs boson), also called the God particle, which is surmised to have caused the Big Bang. Higgs, who first came up with this theory in 1964, suggested that particles gain mass through certain interactions, thereby leading to the production of the basic units of matter.

What's fascinating, however, is that not only is Francois Englert a Nobel Prize winner, but he

is also a Jewish Holocaust survivor. He was born on June 11, 1932 in Brussels, Belgium, and was a young child when Belgium was invaded by the Nazis. Englert was able to survive the Holocaust by living in many different orphanages under assumed identities. Following the war he studied electrical-mechanical engineering in Brussels. In 1959, Englert earned his PhD in physical sciences from the Universite Libre de Bruxelles. He then went on to work at Cornell University, only to later return as a teacher to Universite Libre de Bruxelles. In 1984, Englert became a Professor at Tel Aviv University's Sackler School of Physics and Astronomy. In 2004, together with Higgs, and Robert Brout,

Englert earned Israel's Wolf Prize. Robert Brout was an American-Belgian of Jewish descent. He died in 2011 and as a result, he was unable to receive the Nobel Prize, as the prize is not given posthumously.

Through remarkable self-discipline and strength, Englert, once with no prospects for any future (never mind a successful one), transformed himself into a distinguished Nobel Prize-winning professor. He had every right to live the rest of his life as a defeated man, but instead he used his potential, rebuilt himself, and took advantage of whatever opportunities he could find.

The Nobel Prize has been awarded to over 850 accomplished men and women. At least 20 percent of the recipients have been Jewish, despite the fact that the Jewish population is less than 0.2 percent of the world populace. Jews have received the Nobel Prize in all six areas: Physics, Chemistry, Literature, Physiology/Medicine, Peace, and Economics. In 1905, Adolf von Baeyer became the first Jew to receive the Nobel Prize. He was granted this honor for his work in chemistry, specifically for his work on organic dyes and hydroaromatic compounds.

Since Baeyer, many other Jews have also received this award. In 2013, in addition to Englert, James Rothman and Randy Schekman (Medicine), and Arieh Warshel, Michael Levitt, and Martin Karplus (Chemistry) all received Nobel Prizes.

Elie Wiesel, and Imre Kertesz, both Nobel Prize winners, also survived the horrors of the Holocaust. Walter Kohn, Otto Stern, Albert Einstein, Hans Krebs, and Martin Karplus, all escaped Nazi Germany before the war. In

1958, Boris Pasternak, a Jew living in Russia, was forced by the Soviets to decline accepting the Nobel Prize for Literature, even after he had already accepted it.

I think that this is a powerful lesson for us all. Englert and the other Jewish Holocaust survivors chose to persevere after the war, and are now known for their famous contributions to the scientific world. Their work is widely recognized and the stuff of science-textbooks, just as the Higgs particle will certainly become in the near future.



## College Students: What Does Breast Cancer Have To Do With You?

**Jackie Benayoun** Recently, breast cancer awareness has been gaining momentum. The cause has received tremendous publicity, and fundraising marathons and the sale of pink gear and bracelets have become rampant. Angelina Jolie receiving a preventative mastectomy this past May only heightened awareness about the cause. Undoubtedly, these measures have raised awareness of genetic testing and breast-cancer risks, although there is still much to uncover about the subject. After all, this topic directly relates to us as young women. Statistics say that one in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetimes.

Furthermore, breast cancer genetic screening is becoming more available, after the Supreme Court voted against the Myriad Company last spring. Myriad, a major biotech company in Salt Lake City that held the patent for breast cancer testing, was ruled against on the grounds that genes are products of nature and therefore not patentable. Aside from this court case being monumental on legal grounds, it also effectively allowed other companies and clinics to offer breast cancer testing, lowering the costs from an estimated \$4,000 to \$200.

Due to the drastic lowering in price of breast cancer testing, it's important to understand what the test is. It's a genetic analysis, taken through a

blood, spit or cheek-cell sample that looks to see if a person carries the BRCA-1 or BRCA-2 gene mutation. Carrying the mutation may greatly increase a woman's risk factor, meaning a 40 to 85 percent chance of developing breast cancer and up to a 60 percent chance of developing ovarian cancer by age 70.

According to Rebecca Nagy, president of the National Society of Genetic Counselors, there are a few simple ways to determine whether a person is predisposed for breast cancer. The best way to know is to examine family history. For one, it is important to know if there are two or more cases of breast and/or ovarian cancer in close relatives; particularly if one of the family members was diagnosed before 50 or had cancer in both breasts. In such a case, a person should consult a genetic counselor or physician to understand her personal risk. For example, Ashkenazi Jews are more prone to this mutation as compared to the rest of the population.

As of yet, there are few treatment options for breast cancer aside from chemotherapy, hormone therapy, and the standard chemotherapeutic drugs. There are those that have therefore opted to more drastic preventative measures—such as oophorectomy (removal of the ovaries) and mastectomy (removal of the breasts)—which can easily

reduce a woman's chance of developing these types of cancer by up to 90 percent. There are obviously ethical and Halachic questions that arise in such a situation, and as always, it's best to contact one's LOR (local Orthodox Rabbi).

Although all of this information may be informative and useful to know, college students may still struggle to see any immediate relevance. Unfortunately though, every year, about 70,000 people are diagnosed with cancer between the ages of 15 and 39, according to the Adolescent and Young Adult Oncology Progress review group.

The Young Survival Coalition says that breast cancer accounts for 15% of all cancer diagnoses in people of that age range. And more tragically, not only is a breast cancer diagnosis possible, but it's more aggressive in younger patients with a lower survival rate. Nearly 80 percent of young women diagnosed with breast cancer find their breast abnormality themselves.

Irene Frederick, OB-GYN and academic director of health care leadership at the University of Denver, says there isn't a time period in any woman's life where the complaint of a breast mass should be dismissed.

"I would hope that not only young women's awareness of the possibility of breast cancer improve, but the physician's awareness as well," she says. "There is a lot of downplay, but the rule of thumb is that you never know." Frederick says college students need to spend time making sure they are supporting a healthy immune system — which is something college students overlook by not sleeping and eating an unhealthy diet. Even though some women are genetically predisposed for the disease, poor lifestyle choices will only increase the probability of contracting it.



## The Whys and Hows Behind Sleep and Dreams

**Yael Horvath** If I were granted a superpower of choice, my answer, hands-down, would be to function without ever having to sleep. I mentally salute Thomas Edison, who said, "Sleep is a criminal waste of time and a heritage from our cave days." I don't go so far as to say that "sleep is for wimps," à la Margaret Thatcher, but I do feel that I'd be able to accomplish more, achieve more, if a portion of my day were not consumed in sleep.

Statistics show that 36 percent of a person's life will be spent asleep—which means that if you live to be 90, then 32 years of your life will be spent sleeping. Obviously, this means that sleep is an extremely important process, one which I really ought to stop scorning as the enemy, and instead view as one of the most integral processes of daily functioning.

So why do we sleep? The crux of why lies in its information-processing and memory-consolidating abilities. Studies show that sleep-deprived individuals who try learning a new task have a very difficult time recalling that task and performing it the next day. In addition, our ability to come up with novel solutions to

complex problems is also impaired by a lack of sleep. In fact, a night's sleep enhances that ability threefold because the synaptic connections are strengthened during sleep, while those that are less important fade away.

Proof for this theory may lie in the processes that occur in our brains while we dream. Until recently, oneirology, the scientific study of dreaming, has been an extremely difficult field because dreams are so elusive—about 95% of our dreams are forgotten within the first ten minutes of waking up. But in 1952, researchers at the University of Chicago found that there is a short period of time during a person's sleep which correlates to a unique type of electrical activity. When people are woken up during this time frame, almost all of them say that they had just been dreaming. Furthermore, when a person is in this particular stage of sleep, his or her eyes are rapidly moving. This is where the term REM sleep (rapid eye movement), was introduced.

A study was conducted during which mice were prevented from falling into REM sleep—they had to sit atop an inverted plant

pot, which was submerged in water, so that the pot became an island of sorts. When they would fall into non-REM sleep, they were able to remain situated on the pot; but as soon as their muscles relaxed and they entered REM, they fell off their pots into the water and woke up. The researchers noted that this lack of REM sleep caused a terrible loss of memory in their activities the next day.

Research has also shown that humans exhibit the same exact behavior when deprived of REM sleep. The electrical activity in a person's brain when he is awake and learning a new task, such as a new kind of puzzle, is mimicked by the brain while that person is sleeping. This is because while we sleep, the unconscious part of our brains is busy organizing memories, strengthening the connections we will need in the future and getting rid of the excess information that would otherwise take up unnecessary space.

These electrical impulses are detected by our conscious brain, the cortex—which organizes all of the information in an effort to create cohesion. Dreams are really just a

conglomeration of data that the brain tries organizing into a story while we sleep. This is why dreams are so random—naturally, they are not supposed to make sense because they are simply the results of our cortex trying to synthesize all of the 'noise' that's coming from the unconscious part of the brain. Since dreaming is merely a by-product, it is not considered a primary process with a purpose. Rather, scientists view dreams as the accidental result of the more important process of consolidating information—which ties it all back to why we need sleep in the first place. The theory that the brain requires sleep to process information is manifest in the way our brains work while we dream. And therefore, as students, it's important to keep in mind that cramming and studying for tests is only half the battle—the other half is allowing our brains to retain that information, so that our recall is not only more accessible, but our ability to solve problems and apply knowledge are also sharpened. Now that midterms are over, I'll have the chance to test these findings for myself.

## Twitter's IPO

**Chana Zaks** *Yeshiva University students may be able to buy a piece of Twitter, although many are unaware of the opportunity.*

Twitter, Inc. is scheduled to have its Initial Public Offering this month. If you are like one of the several YU students I've spoken to, you are probably unaware of this, or aren't even interested. You might not even know what an Initial Public Offering is.

An Initial Public Offering, or an IPO, is the first time a privately held company makes its stock available to the public for purchase. A stock is basically a piece, or a share, of the company. Once a company releases its stock to the public, generally any person can purchase a share of the company (including you).

People buy shares of the company generally because they hope to make a profit from it. A way to make profit is by buying the stock at a low price (for example, at \$5) and then selling it for a higher price (at \$10).

An IPO is a way for a company to quickly make a lot of cash. When people buy the

stock, the money goes to the company, and the company can use that money to expand. The company itself chooses how much money they want to raise, and an investment bank (or several investment banks, if the IPO is large enough), act as the underwriter. Underwriting means conducting the process of the IPO, which includes assessing how much the public will be willing to spend on a share. For Twitter, Goldman Sachs is the investment bank of choice, and one billion dollars is the amount they hope to raise.

The company first announced its plans to go public back in September, and with it came an explosion of interest and debate in the business world. Much of this discussion revolved around whether Twitter's IPO would flop like Facebook's did.

Facebook's much anticipated IPO took place on May 28, 2012, and was a tremendous

disappointment. Its stock dropped from \$38 to \$20 in just a few short months, surprising many hopeful investors.

At TechCrunch 2013, Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg was asked what advice he could offer for Twitter. He answered:



"I'm kind of like the least... person you would want to ask ... [about] how to make a smooth IPO" (laughs).

When asked their opinion on the IPO, most Stern and Syms students are apathetic, skeptical, and/or both.

Physics major Gaby Elkaim (Stern '14) is no exception.

"Twitter is similar to Facebook (in that they are both social media websites funded solely through advertisers), and I would expect based on precedence that it will have a similar outcome as Facebook. I don't know what will

happen, I just know what *has* happened," she says.

"Here's the catch, though: I don't care," Elkaim adds.

Other students, while still apathetic, are slightly more hopeful. "Twitter will probably learn from Facebook's mistakes. Because of that, there is a good chance that they will do well," says optimistic accounting major, Sima Weissman (Syms '15).

Much of Twitter's success is dependent on the public's attitude towards the company. The more people like the company, the more people will buy its stock, and the higher the stock price will rise. In contrast, the less people like the company, the less people will buy the stock, and the lower the stock price will drop. The stock price may even go below its original cost, causing people to lose money.

Either YU students may be missing a pot of gold, or their ignorance may be helping them avoid another disappointment.

## One Year Later: Sandy, Long Beach, and an Unexpected Medical Condition

**Dahlia Pasik** Hailing from Long Beach, NY, it is an understatement to say that I truly experienced the full-blown effects of Hurricane Sandy. Between the week of no electricity during the winter, the communal meals at the local Synagogue, and the countless families that had to relocate because their homes were left in ruins, the effects of Sandy took a major toll on the people of Long Beach.

I will never forget driving through the desolate streets and seeing the once beautiful, scenic town completely overturned. Broadway Street, parallel to what used to be a functioning boardwalk, stood as a disastrous mess. On the west end of Long Beach the notion of recovery was overwhelming. Streets and cars were buried in 6 feet of ocean sand. Homes that were drenched in a tidal surge ended up a total loss. The residential streets were flooded with the contents of peoples' homes demolished by the hurricane. The town I once called home looked unrecognizable.

The hurricane was underrated—no one was prepared for the extent of damage that it caused. As one Long Beach official noted, "The cost of rebuilding is staggering... it will cost \$200 million just to get the sand off the roads and back on the beach." There are families that were literally left homeless—according to Mayor Bloomberg, an estimated 40,000 New Yorkers. For most, especially those in the upper and middle class, it was a shocking condition.

The circumstances were so horrific that FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) went door to door to check on residents' health and safety. The Army National Guard handed out meals, water, and blankets to large families.

Although people are aware of the physical damage and destruction that Sandy caused, few are aware of the extent of peoples' suffering. Many victims of the storm suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or as the victims call it, "Post Traumatic Sandy Disorder". Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a severe condition that may develop after a person is exposed to one or more traumatic events, such as sexual assault, serious injury or the threat of death. The diagnosis is given when the following symptoms are present: disturbing recurring flashbacks, avoidance or numbing of memories of the event, and high levels of anxiety that continue for more than a month after the traumatic event. Effectively, the victims of the super storm, who have already battled destruction of their homes and health issues from mold and injuries, are now trying to battle this medical condition as well.

The symptoms and side-effects extend well beyond mental state, and also affect the victim's physical and emotional state. These include avoiding activities that were once enjoyable, feeling glum about the future, experiencing difficulty maintaining close relationships, irritability or anger, guilt, self-

destructive behavior, and trouble sleeping. People with PTSD are at a higher risk of other mental health problems and illness, including: depression, substance abuse, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts and actions, cardiovascular disease, chronic pain, autoimmune diseases, and musculoskeletal conditions.

Furthermore, a study published a few years ago in BMC Psychiatry discovered that pregnant women who endure psychological stress associated with PTSD are more likely to give birth to a child who develops schizophrenia. According to lead authors of the study, Dolores Malaspina M.D., M.Sc.P.H., Anita Steckler, and Joseph Steckler, "The stresses in question are those that would be experienced in a natural disaster such as an earthquake or hurricane, a terrorist attack, or a sudden bereavement". Data collected from 88,829 people born in Jerusalem from 1964 to 1976, confirms these findings. Researchers discovered that the offspring of women who were in their second month of pregnancy during the height of the Six Day War displayed a significantly higher incidence of having schizophrenic children over the subsequent years. Malaspina explains that "the placenta is very sensitive to stress hormones in the mother." Therefore, a stressful situation such as a natural disaster could not only psychologically harm people that experience the event, but also fetuses in utero.

In order to deal with the psychological

trauma many are experiencing, several local organizations in Long Beach have been formed. Project Hope is one of them. The Hope Organization aims to deal with any sort of mental trauma that the storm may have caused for people, ranging from young adolescents to adults. Additionally, a confidential hotline has been instituted for those who seek help and are in need of advice and support. Of course, all of these resources are free of charge.

So although it is a year after the storm and most people assume that the damages have been recovered, they are mistaken. There are still debts to be repaid, homes to be rebuilt, and even worse, permanent or long-term psychological trauma caused by the storm. And although most of us are students and the effects of the storm may have been experienced to different degrees, the best we can do is to be aware. Be aware that there were professionals who lost their jobs, businesses were forced to close, countless families were left with little to nothing, and even now, there are still those of us who are feeling the sting. So the next time I take a late-night run on the recently newly rebuilt boardwalk (which, by the way, took an estimated 44 million dollars to rebuild), I take a moment to think. I slow down, pull out my headphones, and look around. It is then that I realize that you don't fully appreciate what you have until the thing that is most essential to you is pulled out from right under your feet—literally.



## Letter-to-the-Editor

Dear Editor,

Michal Schechter's recent article entitled "Feeling Marginalized Uptown: A Stern Student's Perspective" caused many people to reexamine the religious opportunities available to women who spend time on the Wilf campus. Among her many concerns was the fact that there was no place for her to daven with an official minyan on the uptown campus. Michal's article spurred us to work with her to try and change this phenomenon and create a regular women's section at one of the YU minyanim.

We are starting this initiative with the 10 p.m. Maariv Minyan in the Rubin Shul for several reasons. Firstly, during the school year, most of the women who are on the Wilf Campus are there at night, so maariv is the time when having a women's section at a minyan is the most relevant. Also, the Rubin Shul is a space that is generally open to women, and is out of the way of the Glueck Beit Midrash and other sensitive areas on the Wilf campus. The gabbaim of this minyan have graciously agreed to ensure that the mechitzot will always be in place. So far, several women have been coming to this minyan for about two months, and have felt comfortable and welcome there.

Although other issues may remain, the mechitza at this minyan is a significant improvement. While a few women regularly attend this minyan, we realize that there are many women who do not realize such a minyan exists. We encourage those interested to take part in this new opportunity, and hopefully, women will continue to have their religious needs met on the uptown campus.

Sincerely,  
Adi Cohen and Davida Kollmar

## Expanding the Palace of Jewry

*Continued from page 12*

the installation of the new President at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah. Rabbi Asher Lopatin, brought in from his pulpit in Chicago, elected to invite fellow clergy members from other leading rabbinic seminaries to a roundtable discussion during this joyous event. Lopatin invited Dr. Arnold M. Eisen, the Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi David Ellenson, President of Hebrew Union College, and Rabbi Arthur Green, a professor at Hebrew College (in addition to Rabbi Elka Abramson, the President of the Wexner Foundation). No Orthodox leaders, other than Lopatin, were involved in this discussion (President Richard Joel was invited, but unable to attend). While it appears that the importance of *intrafaith* dialogue was addressed by these two prominent figures - Calderon and Lopatin - I worry that this value has yet to permeate the walls of Yeshiva University, which often tend to shut out more than they let in. By allowing Jews - even if they do not dress, think, or act in the same way that we do - into our halls and our conversations, we can begin to strengthen the *entire* Jewish community. Together, we can address the myth that Centrist Orthodoxy has a monopoly on true Jewish experience and enhance this rich tradition for all those who sit at its table.

In my first week at Stern College, during my composition course, Dr. Joy Ladin presented me with Robert Frost's poem, "Mending Wall." The first line of this poem reads as follows: "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." I spent the entire semester, and much of my Stern career, trying to understand this poem and its opening line. I believed that separation - a

word that makes its way into so much of Jewish ritual and tradition - was certainly a positive reality. At the time, I was drawn to the final line of Frost's work: "Good fences make good neighbors." Separation begets holiness; holiness begets godliness. Surely fences do make good neighbors. During my tenure at Stern, and in the year and change since I have graduated, something has changed. Something there is that doesn't love a wall: me. I find myself more inclined to break down both fences and walls, gerrymandering the Jewish community - the entire Jewish community - to include people of varying practice and belief. Frost's words now resonate with me in a new way - neighbors are essential, the dividers are not.

As one of my colleagues, Anat Barber, a previous Stern Student Council President and current UJA-Federation employee, writes so eloquently in the Peoplehood Papers: "We need instead to understand Pluralism as the need to learn about the multiplicity of Jewish voices, including those who see themselves as ultimate truth and reject ours, as a means to help us further refine and deepen our Jewish understanding regardless of your own religious approach." We need to pursue justice, appreciate the people and places that have enabled us to thrive, break down walls and stereotypes, and always, ensure that you work somewhere that serves free coffee.

*Currently, Jina works as a Program Associate in the Office of Educational Resources and Organizational Development at UJA-Federation of NY.*

# NEXT MONTH IN STERN...

December 2013						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Chanukah	2 Chanukah  MBB vs. The College at Old Westbury	3 Chanukah	4 Chanukah	5 Chanukah	6	7 Parshas Vayigash Democrat/ Republicans Club Shabbaton
8	9	10 MBB vs. Purchase College  WBB vs. Purchase College	11	12	13 Asara B'Tevet	14 Parshas Vayichi YACHAD Shabbaton MBB vs. Lehman College
15 WBB vs. Notre Dame of Maryland University	16	17	18 WBB vs. Wheaton College (MA)	19	20	21 Parshas Shemos Seminary Week-end (Harova and Michlalah)
22	23 Reading Day	24 Reading Day	25 Reading Day	26 Reading Day	27 Reading Day	28 Parshas Va'era Reading Week Shabbaton
29 Reading Day	30 SCW Finals	31 SCW Finals				

RAQUEL MILLER