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“To Build as You Cut Down”: New Provost Dr. Selma Botman’s Game Plan

Shalva Ginsparg Yeshiva University’s months-long search for a new provost has culminated in the appointment of Dr. Selma Botman. In an interview with the Observer, Dr. Botman encouraged dialogue between the administration and the student body and called for creative solutions to YU’s financial challenges. “YU is so important that it must be made sustainable,” she declared.

Dr. Botman hails originally from Chelsea, Massachusetts and has a PhD in history and Middle Eastern studies from Harvard University. She has previously served as the provost of the City University of New York, as well as president of the University of Southern Maine. As part of the first generation in her family to go to college, Dr. Botman describes her decades of service in higher education as

partly biographical: “Education has changed my life.”

One of Dr. Botman’s primary objectives as provost is to “align the academic core with the business plan.” Dr. Botman views YU’s financial challenges as part of a larger trend in higher education, noting that universities around the nation have adopted a business model which is largely unsustainable because it promotes expansion of services, even as the growth of financial resources lags behind. Echoing President Joel’s e-mail to the student body this past December, Dr. Botman suggested that as part of the plan for financial rehabilitation, certain programs and services may be cut.

However, she insists that downsizing must co-exist with innovating and that the

experience of the student body cannot be compromised.

“You have to build at the same time that you cut,” she said.

The success of such operational changes will hinge, according to Dr. Botman, both on her ability to communicate the seriousness of the financial situation and on the faculty’s willingness to recognize the “depth of the problem.”

Dr. Botman also stressed the importance of a vocal and active student body. “Students need to communicate gaps of the curricular tracks within an existing major and a new major,” she said. “They can expect me to listen

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Yeshiva University

Oh Holy Night: A Response

Rabbi Lawrence Hajioff Experiencing the spiritual and the Divine can be very powerful. We have all felt the transcendent experience of standing at the Kotel and feeling connected to G-d, our people, and thousands of years of Jewish history. To be clear, these experiences are not reserved to Jews. Judaism does not have a monopoly on G-d. But we do have a direct and specific way to reach out to Him. And that way is broader than many people give Judaism credit for.

Reading Rachel Renz’s article in the Observer saddened me, and not for the reasons you may think. The halachic implications of entering a church and participating in the service was not the issue. What did, however, upset me was how we can wax lyrical about the “auspicious service” of the Cathedral, yet not realize that what we do and say can influence not just ourselves, but the many people who read our words.

I don’t know Rachel. However, I am fairly certain she is not going to become a regular attendee of church services. She won’t give up her connection to her faith and begin sporting a cross or adorn her home with a Christmas tree with a Star of David perched on top. She won’t, but others will and do. Many others.

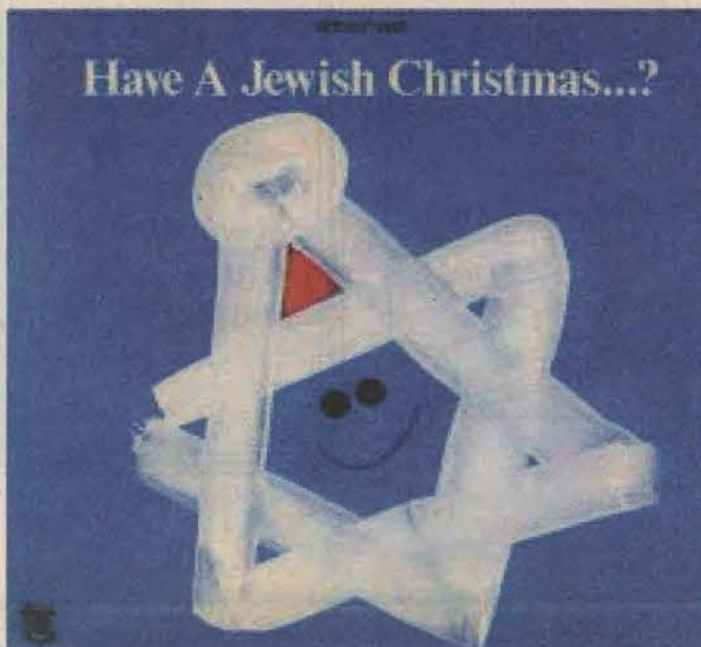
I also don’t believe that most readers of her article will create a stampede to St. Patrick’s Cathedral on Christmas Eve 2014, hoping to catch a glimpse of Timothy
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The Discontinuation of the Presidential Fellowship

Elana Kook In a disappointing blow to Yeshiva University undergraduates, the Office of the President released an announcement on February 5th stating that they were discontinuing the Presidential Fellowship next year. Although the message only alluded to the current financial predicament, this new development is not a surprise in light of the hot-topic discussion of upcoming budget cuts. This comes as a setback to many seniors who were

considering the Presidential Fellowship as a viable option for post-graduation.

For the past ten years, one hundred fifty Yeshiva University students were offered the opportunity to partake in a year-long fellowship aiding the Office of the President with various duties in the many different departments of the university. In addition to working within the different areas of the school, there
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The Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations

Hannah Dreyfus-Reinstein

I have no desire to wear tefillin.

Now, lest you think this yet another article about women wearing tefillin, I assure you it is not. I am not here to deplore the state of Modern Orthodoxy, or wax poetic about religious rituals. Rather, I want to talk about expectations. Or rather, how low expectations affect our religious lives.

In the Orthodox community, Jewish women are not expected to wake up at 8am every morning and strap phylacteries on their foreheads. Women are also not expected to attend prayer services three times a day. There is no commandment, or expectation, for a woman to take out a Talmud, or Bible, for that matter, and dedicate a couple minutes to Torah-study every day. Within our community, much less is expected of women with regards to communal and religious obligations than of men.

From a grade-school-kid perspective, it seems that women have struck a pretty sweet deal. We get all the perks of association and belonging, without any of the responsibilities. On a lazy Saturday morning, we can roll out of bed at whichever hour we so choose, with no fear of receiving disapproving or questioning looks from our peers when we stroll into synagogue at 10:30am. Nope—no negative press for eating inside when it's too cold in the sukkah, and no remonstrative remarks for skipping services on the High Holidays when you're not feeling well. No one's going to turn down a date with a girl because she doesn't learn daf yomi, or never attends night-seder.

So, what's the catch? Why are we chasing after more homework?

The answer is simple: the lower the expectations, the harder it is to believe our contributions matter. Take the well-known story of a teacher who walks into a remedial level-classroom and mistakes it for high-honors. The teacher immediately treats the students differently—she expects them to do their homework, show up for class on time, and speak up. The students, accustomed to being treated like they're low-priority, respond immediately to the raised expectations. For the first time, they are being given respect and trust. They respond with excellence. Accountability breeds reliability.

Expectations demand results.

What do low religious expectations do to our 'performance'? Low expectations make us apathetic and lazy. Low expectations make us feel useless and extraneous; low expectations make us disbelieving that our contributions actually matter. The punch line: low expectations from others cause us to have low expectations of ourselves.

I was inspired to write this article after hearing a speech given by Leah Sarna, a senior at Yale University, at the 2013 JOFA conference. Sarna eloquently, and with astounding precision, addressed the problem of low expectations for women in the Jewish community. "The secular world asks a tremendous amount from women today," said Sarna. "The religious world hasn't really upped its demands. And, so far, us Orthodox feminists have hardly asked it to."

Sarna quoted the term "the soft bigotry of low expectations" (used by President George W. Bush when he was working to implement education-reform). The term refers to the exact phenomenon Orthodox Jewish women experience in the religious realm—the lower the expectations, the lower our motivations, and, more importantly, the lower our desire to be religiously motivated.

Troubled by this realization, Sarna did exactly what we are all capable of doing: she worked to change the system. In her speech, Sarna describes how she and friend decided to attend prayer services every day. Her presence, and absence when she couldn't make it, began to be noticed and acknowledged. "We even started to be mentioned in the daily announcements," Sarna shared proudly. By raising expectations for herself when it came to ritual participation, she began to feel like a vital and significant part of her community.

In preparation for this article, I realized the extent to which I've internalized the message that my presence in the synagogue, or in the Beit Midrash, is insignificant. When I walk past the brightly lit windows of the Glueck Beit Midrash every day on my way home, it still astounds me that I'm not allowed inside. There is no such place for women on this campus, I think to myself. And, if there were such a place available, would I go? Would I make the trek out of my comfortable apartment to sit for an

hour with a chavruta? Would I carve out the time in my busy schedule to learn material not obviously relevant to my day-to-day routine? Or, has the message that it's simply not my chiyuv (responsibility), sunk in too deeply to backtrack?

As many are wont to point out, the problem, like most, is circular. Women feel marginalized and estranged during prayer services or in the study hall, and so they choose not to attend. Eventually, services learn not to expect their presence and do not prepare properly for the times when women do choose to attend. The system of marginalization spirals.

The solution must be arrived upon from both ends. Congregations need to start acknowledging, and expecting, women's equal participation. A mechtza should never be lacking, and the women's section should never become a storage area. High-level learning opportunities for women should be provided and encouraged in synagogues and universities.

The rest of the responsibility, however, lies with us. We have to start having higher expectations of ourselves. We have to start demanding that we show up on time for services. We have to start insisting that time be set aside for learning Torah daily. "Dedication—frankly, I think we need more of it," said Sarna.

At Stern, many women have already begun raising the expectations, and opportunities have steadily begun to follow suit. In the recent year, important strides have been taken. On the men's campus, Rubin shul offers a shacharit and (newly instated) m'aariv minyan for women every day. On the Stern campus, a communal shacharit takes place every morning in the Beit Midrash at 8:15am, and a special mincha with a minyan is available every Wednesday evening, as well as on Rosh Chodesh. Learning opportunities and peer-taught chaburot are becoming increasingly frequent and available.

So, no—we don't have to lay tefillin to be dedicated.

But we do have to start believing, and internalizing, that our presence, in the synagogue, in the study hall, and in our communities at large, is just an essential and important as any man's.

When we start to believe this, others will too.



Lizzie Rozentsvayge and Rachel Miriam Rosenfeld

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Project Megilas Esther: A New Purim Initiative

Julie Wasserman Purim at Stern will sound a little different this year thanks to Project *Megilas Esther*, an initiative to

introduce women's *kriyat hamegilah* on the Beren campus. The team spearheading the project includes students Rivka Hia ('16), Renana Nerwen ('15), Jordy Bernstein ('14), Ariella Rothchild ('14) and, at the helm, Sarah Robinson ('15). Robinson describes the project as "an amazing opportunity to play a part in a beautiful *mitzvah* and engage in the *halachic* process."

Though there have been women's *megilah* readings in Stern the past, Project *Megilas Esther* is unique in that almost half of the readers have never read *megilah* before and that instead of outsourcing the *kriyah* teaching to members of the NYC communities, as has been done in the past, the *Megilas Esther* project will train readers in several sessions led by Robinson.

Project *Megilas Esther* aims for the highest standards in *kriyah*, reciting of the ancient text, by training female readers to not only know the *teamim* (signs), but also to learn the system of proper pronunciations required to fulfill

the *mitzvah* of *kriyat hamegilah*. To ensure that readers can distinguish between the various sounds as necessary, they will spend hours preparing their *perakim* (portions), after which they will be tested for reading accuracy.

"Project *Megilas Esther* is a huge undertaking," Robinson explains. "It entails teaching a four-part course on the *teamim* and how to properly read the *megilah* for a *kosher* reading. It involves finding and testing readers. Stern currently does not own a *megilah*, so it also involves finding someone who is willing to lend their family's *megilah*."

Even with all of the logistical challenges, Robinson says that the project's chief priority is the quality of the reading. "The most important thing is that we have the most *li'chatchilah* (ideal) reading of *Megilas Esther*," Robinson says. "This is why we demand that our readers be careful about every *shevah nah* and *shevah nach* (symbols in the text). These measures are

NEWS

ADENA KLEINER
SHALVA GINSPARG

ideal when reading scripture in general but are absolutely necessary when reading a *megilah*."

To further ensure *halachic* correctness, the project has consulted with Rabbi Dr. Jeremy Weider, *Rosh Yeshiva* and authority at YU on proper *kriyat hamegilah*.

Through all the training and pre-Purim preparation, Project *Megilas Esther* hopes to elevate the Purim experience at Stern. "I can only speak from my personal experience," said Robinson. "Ever since I began reading *megilah*, my Purim has become much more meaningful."

All women are welcome to attend the reading on Purim night, *motzei Shabbos* March 15th.



facebook.com

More Than a Vacation: CJF Winter Missions 2014

Sara C. Olson Though the absence of the CJF's missions to Nicaragua and Mexico this year certainly did not go unnoted, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive for the three missions that were offered: Jewish Life Coast to Coast, in which participants travelled to different Jewish communities across the U.S. to learn about leadership and how to be an active participant in running a community; Counterpoint Israel, in which participants taught English and ran activities for children in several communities in southern Israel; and Service Mission to Ukraine, in which participants, through volunteer work and teaching, made a positive impact on the Ukrainian Jewish community.

Though many of her friends planned relaxing trips to exotic destinations such as Puerto Rico and the Bahamas, Michelle Levine, a junior and the treasurer for SCWSC, chose instead to go on this year's mission to Ukraine. Though Levine concedes that a tropical getaway would have been an "appealing respite from the stress of finals," she was inspired by her past Torah Tours experiences in Merrick, Washington D.C., and Albany to get involved in another program led by the CJF.

SCWSC recording secretary Danielle Lazarus ('15), who went on the CJF's Counterpoint Israel mission, echoed Levine's sentiments. "After my experiences on Counterpoint Israel this past summer, I decided that I wanted to go back to Dimona in the winter," Lazarus describes Counterpoint Israel as a "two-way street," noting that her efforts on behalf of the Israeli children were rewarded with the "warmth and happiness that they radiate." "After a semester of classes, I was eager to be greeted by those smiles," she said.

For Alyssa Greenberg, a senior at Stern College and co-head of the Jewish education club Al Pi Darko, CJF inspiration was to be found not across the Atlantic Ocean, but in Jewish communities around the U.S. "Forever transformed by special experiences I have had with the CJF, I decided to embark on Jewish Life Cast to Coast," she commented. "Germany Close Up, Counterpoint, and Torah Tours have taught me about the richness of Jewish history, the beauty of cultivating teamwork, the intrinsic connection among Jewish communities regardless of location on a map,

and the spark within every child. I wanted to spend my winter break in a memorable way, and I trust the CJF to design and execute remarkable programming."

As to the absence of the two volunteer programs in Nicaragua and in Mexico, Aliza Abrams, Director of the Department of Service Learning in the CJF, clarified that the loss of these two programs this semester was not for financial reasons. "In years past we partnered with the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) to run service missions in Central and South America," said Abrams. "In the middle of the year last year AJWS announced that they would be restructuring their programming and no longer offering these types of service learning missions to college students. As a result we were unable to run the program in partnership with them."

Though Abrams notes that she "definitely heard some disappointment from students who had wanted to volunteer in places like Nicaragua and Mexico," the cancellation of the two programs did not affect application numbers; CJF received an "overwhelming number of applications."

However, despite the success of this year's missions, Abrams revealed that the CJF is "currently looking for new NGO's to partner with in order to continue to send students on similar service missions."

Levine herself was disappointed when she heard that the Nicaragua and Mexico trips were cancelled, but is, in retrospect, grateful that the cancellations led her to participate in the Ukraine mission. "As a result of the downsizing, I ended up traveling to

Ukraine, a trip I initially dismissed for other locations, and broadened my connection with the global Jewish community," commented Levine.

While other international programs may be temporarily on hold, the CJF recently announced that Counterpoint Israel doubled in size this past winter, a sure sign that CJF missions are as anticipated as ever, despite this year's "downsize." And years-worth of student feedback and survey data received by the CJF from participants shows that the missions can indeed be life-changing. According to Abrams, studies showed that participating students became "more inclined to take positions of leadership on campus, as well as in their future communities, after graduation"; that, "more people [have chosen] to go into education after going on Counterpoint Israel and Jewish Life Coast to Coast"; and that there have even been "students who loved their experience in the Negev on

Counterpoint so much that they've moved down there."

Based on the responses of this year's participants, the impact of the winter 2014 missions has been no less significant. Jennifer Stieglitz, who went on Coast to Coast, credits the program with teaching her just how much can be accomplished in one day. "When I got back and had my last day of vacation, during which I did not have too much to do, it felt extremely weird! This desire to be productive is now a part of me."

Sophomore Shayna Schwarzberg, who went on Coast to Coast with Stieglitz, relayed that after visiting the Jewish communities in the Midwest, she has a greater understanding of the importance of communal involvement. "[This] trip has opened my eyes to realize that in addition to whatever I do professionally, I need to be an active participant in my Jewish Community- wherever that may be."



<http://yuwinterbreak2014.tumblr.com/>

Seforim Sale 2014: Not Your Ordinary Book Sale



Jennifer Stieglitz In the midst of the cold winter months, with no days off in sight, the 2014 Seforim Sale provides a happy diversion from the monotony of the school semester. Termed "North America's largest Jewish book sale," the sale, which is held in Yeshiva University's Belfour Hall, features a vast array of Judaic books and resources. This year, though the general structure of the sale is the same, some important tweaks have been instituted.

For one, the staff size has been decreased. Instead of maintaining two people in each section, now there is only one at all times. Another executive decision was to remain

closed on Tuesdays, a day which is typically the least busy. This change allows the Seforim Sale team a day to restock and prepare for the rest of the week. Additionally, the sale has incorporated a new initiative to display works of interest on a featured table. For example, on opening day, when Chief Rabbi Sacks spoke across the street in Zysman Hall, the tables were stocked with all his works.

The greatest difference this year is the sale's partnership with Yeshiva University. According to sale president and YU graduate Gedalia Romanoff, "This was carried out in two ways. Firstly, a special class was created at YU to help direct efforts in areas that were

lacking. Secondly, a shared goal between the Sale and Yeshiva was to approach suppliers about garnering the lowest possible prices we could receive on seforim. With their help we feel confident saying you will be hard pressed to find seforim cheaper anywhere else."

A goal of the sale, of course, is to bring in revenue, some of which is used to support many undergraduate scholarships and student activities. But that is merely one aspect. According to board member Molly Brakha ('15), "The sale is more than just a place to buy books, but it is an experience as well. It is the place where just about everyone can find the book they are looking for."

From cookbooks to Gemara to Machshava, the sale has it all. According to Romanoff, the sale's "biggest concern" is "providing the wider global Jewish community access to the largest selection of Jewish scholarship."

Because of this wide ranging assortment and the environment that accompanies it, working at the sale is a tremendously attractive job opportunity for many Stern and YC students. Sima Gold, a sophomore currently working at the sale, expressed that her desire to participate began when her high school brought her to visit the sale in twelfth grade. "The atmosphere was so much fun and I knew that this was something I wanted to be part of someday," she said.

Although it's not quite clear why, the sale fosters incredible relationships among the staff members, as well as between the workers and customers. By working there, Sima Gold says she has become friends with people in her

section and other sections whom she met along the way.

After her first day working at the sale, sophomore Evie Denmark posted the following Facebook status: "In one day of working at the Seforim Sale I got three brachot (for finding things for people), one offer to grad school and the chance to help great people find great books!"

The famous notion that many find the person they will marry through this sale is not a myth. Last year alone, five couples met, three of whom are now married. As Romanoff expresses, "The Seforim Sale is really just a great place for like-minded people to interact with one another. At the same time the Sale might have it in it to fix the shidduch crisis."

Ultimately, as Brakha explains: "I think it has to do with being a part of something that is so big. Yes, we may be a part of YU, but the sale is a way of bringing together the entire Jewish Community."



Goodbye Facebook Groups, Hello YU Hotspot

Rivka Hia As an avid Facebook user, I stumbled across a post for Yuhotspot.org, a new website for YU students which combines many of the features of popular social media websites. I had the pleasure of interviewing the website's developer, Michael Peres, a Computer Science graduate from Canada who currently studies Engineering and Mathematics in Yeshiva University. Michael has been a part of many organizations which help others in Canada and now that he studies in YU, he constantly thinks of ways to help others. Besides YU Hotspot, Michael has recently created the Hopebook.org website, for Hopebook Inc., a non-profit organization of which he is an active member and which was created by YU students to help those fighting cancer, and Ridejar.com, a ride sharing network to benefit the Jewish community which aggregates information from various Facebook groups.

YU Hotspot offers current information and fresh ideas to YU students, faculty, staff, and anyone affiliated with YU. Some of YU Hotspot's features include: a blogging system for personal posts on topics of interest to the YU community, ride sharing in conjunction with Ridejar.com (which is especially useful for long driving distances), a system similar to Craigslist for buying and selling with a built-in Paypal option, and links to services within the YU community. The site also features a forum for discussions, debate, questions, YU experiences and advice on courses and career paths, as well as a live chat-room for communication during events and for conversations between members of the YU community.

Observer: What is YU Hotspot?

MP: YU Hotspot is a social network

special for YU. It is used for the sharing of information about academics, meet-ups, marketing, rides, and buying and selling. It is a place where people can share their thoughts, talents and ideas with the YU community.

Where did you get the idea to create YU Hotspot, and what motivated you to actually make it?

MP: People from YU kept coming over to me to start something. They wanted a more efficient way to share ideas. I had the feeling something was missing. Without an effective means of communication, information gets lost. I wanted to offer the students of YU the tools and medium to express themselves. I wanted a forum for students to be able to discuss news, halakha, politics, academics, and felt obligated to create it as my contribution to benefit the YU community. The college years are among the most important years in determining one's future, I wanted to synthesize the information necessary for making new decisions.

What's your favorite feature on the website?

MP: I love gathering information from articles, but don't always love reading them.

I created a feature for the website to read blog posts to you. Sure it's a computer, but it's great for multi-tasking and those nights when you're too tired to read for yourself.

Do you think this will encourage YU students not on Facebook to get involved with the YU community online?

MP: Not everyone has a Facebook. Teachers and professionals with Facebook may not want to express their opinions on Facebook. YU Hotspot is useful to those students not on Facebook as well as those who use Facebook.

Does YU Hotspot have features that Facebook does not?

MP: Facebook is a very general website. Its groups are great, but scattered. Facebook also lacks a community-wide chat option, as well as organized ways to advertise tutoring and other services.

How do you think this will affect the YU community?

MP: If people use it, it could be an easier way of helping fellow students out in myriad ways. It will hopefully revolutionize the cyber communication at YU and change the way students interact with each other.

What do you want students to get out of it?

MP: I want them to conduct research more efficiently, share their data and help make the school a better place. It is an easy forum for students to help other students by sharing their experiences and getting information from those who know.

Anything else we should know?

MP: Stay tuned for a forthcoming YU Hotspot mobile app, an aesthetics-driven redesigned site, and major updates focused on enhancing academic science research.



<http://yuhotspot.org/>

New Provost's Game Plan

Continued from page 1



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and to accommodate their needs."

Considering that in her previous administrative roles Dr. Botman spearheaded a campaign which raised money for scholarships and for a new performing arts center, the recent reduction of academic scholarships and the sale of the Schottenstein cultural center may be particularly worthwhile topics for students to discuss with the new provost.

Dr. Botman also expressed her admiration for the YU student, who manages both a dual curriculum and a rich extracurricular schedule. "Students are too busy to not be attended to."

In addition to her administrative and structural goals for the University, Dr. Botman hopes to teach a history course on the Middle East at Stern, and describes teaching and interacting with students as one of the most rewarding aspects of her experience in higher education.

In 1977, Dr. Blanche Blank became YU's first female academic vice president; when Dr. Botman formally steps into her role as provost in July, replacing current provost Dr. Morton Lowengrub, she will become part of a long line of women who have served in high academic posts at the University.



Tikvah Summer Fellowship on Jewish Thought and Citizenship

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Opinions Vary on Women and Tefillin Question

Shalva Ginsparg After SAR, a Modern Orthodox high school in Riverdale, New York, announced its decision to allow female students to lay Tefillin during school prayer services, the question of whether women should wear Tefillin has taken center stage within and beyond the Orthodox Jewish community.

In a January letter to SAR's parent body, Principal Tully Harcsztark explained his rationale for the policy change.

"At its core, women donning Tefillin is a discretionary act in Jewish law," he wrote. "While our community has adopted as normative the view that women refrain from this act, I see the range of rishonim who allow women to don tefillin as support to give space to that practice within our community."

In addition, Rabbi Harcsztark argued that the policy change would serve as a lesson to students to "not be afraid of different forms of Avodat Hashem when there is halakhic argument to support it."

Rabbi Harcsztark also stressed the sincerity of the two students who requested the right to lay tefillin, Yael Marans ('16) and Ronit Morris ('15), noting that the students have both been putting on Tefillin since their Bat Mitzvah, in accordance with their families' practice, and, prior to the policy change, had been waking up early in order to lay Tefillin at home, because they were not permitted to do so at school.

In an article published by SAR's student newspaper, *The Buzz*, Marans described her own reasons for wanting to lay Tefillin: "I'm not going to say that every time I lay tefillin I feel a renewed awe of God, but sometimes it really makes me think. It's just something in my day that makes me really conscious and concentrated."

Following SAR's December announcement, Ramaz, a Modern Orthodox high school in the Upper East Side, declared that it too would permit female students to lay Tefillin. Though Ramaz students were denied permission to put on Tefillin at school when the issue was raised in the early 1990s, Principal Rabbi Haskel

Lookstein told the Jewish Week that if asked the question today, "we are in agreement that if a young woman wanted to put on tefillin and tallit, she could daven with us in our school minyan."

When faced with this issue in November 2013, Rabbi Ari Segal, principal of Shalhevet, a Modern Orthodox high school in LA, did not side with the position now held by SAR and Ramaz.

"While there certainly exist legitimate halakhic and rabbinic sources that suggest permitting the practice of women wearing tefillin (hence my willingness and desire to discuss the issue publicly and my encouraging her to wear tefillin at a synagogue), Shalhevet is a school that draws from a broad spectrum," Rabbi Segal wrote in an e-mail to the community. "In order to maintain that diversity, there will be times when something might be technically permitted but not wise to allow."

In a striking testament to the power of social media, the article which, after circulating

around Facebook, first garnered national attention for SAR's policy change was published by Shalhevet's student newspaper, the *Boiling Point*.

The issue was then quickly taken up by other Jewish publications, including *Haaretz*, the *Forward*, and the *Jewish Week*.

Especially relevant to the YU community is a response composed by Rav Hershel Schachter, Rosh Yeshiva of YU's Rabbi Isaac Elchonon Theological Seminary (RIETS). The response, which was distributed to the YU Beit Medrash in early February, delineates the halakhic missteps of those advocating for women to lay Tefillin, and, more broadly, objects to the process through which this halakhic conclusion was both reached and disseminated.

In exploring the halakhic background of the issue, Rav Schachter cites the view of Rabbi Moshe Isserles (the Rama) in the *Shulchan Arukh* that Tefillin should be worn as minimally as possible, because of the difficulty of maintaining the lofty spiritual state that is

required while one wears Tefillin. It was based on this position of the Rama, Rav Schachter points out, that about 40 years ago the Rav ruled that a female student at Frisch should not lay Tefillin. Though some time has elapsed since that ruling, Rav Schachter questions whether we have so advanced spiritually in these past 40 years that the concern raised by the Rama would no longer apply.

But even beyond the halakhic intricacies of the issue, Rav Schachter emphasizes the dangerous ideological implication of deviating from a centuries-old tradition without consulting first with the great Torah scholars of our day.

In what Rav Schachter perceives as an echo of the anti-authority, anti-tradition mentality of the Conservative movement, today's Tefillin issue has spawned a Halakhic "free-for-all," with Rabbis of limited background and authority, (some emboldened, he suggests, by the ability to google and read up on the topic on Otzar HaHochma), publicly proclaiming their viewpoint on the Internet and choosing not to defer to the halakhic experts. This abrogation of halakhic authority, Rav Schachter writes, is anathema to Orthodoxy. As he illustrates through a series of historical examples, including a conversation between the Rav and Ben Gurion, that which is halakhically acceptable may still be forbidden or resisted if it represents a push to undermine the halakhic process.

As such, Rav Schachter urges the YU community to see what is "right under its nose," namely, that the women and Tefillin issue is not limited to the here and now, but as a symptom of a crooked ideology, threatens to unravel the fabric of Orthodoxy's halakhic system.

Rav Schachter concludes by insisting that the women who wish to wear Tefillin have noble intentions and are not at fault; rather they are being led astray by those who believe that this issue is a simple matter that can be solved without the guidance of this generation's most eminent Halakhic authorities.



www.shalomlife.com The Ramaz School in Manhattan has made its decision public, and now allows female students to wear tefillin during prayer.

Honor's Full-Tuition Scholarship Eliminated

Rina Haller The S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program has reduced the amount of scholarship money offered to applicants, due to a limited amount of funding and to the growth of the program. While honors students were previously eligible for scholarships up to \$36,600 (a full scholarship), the modifications reduce the honors merit scholarship to \$30,000.

When the S. Daniel Abraham Honor Program at Stern was created fifteen years ago, the plan was for the program to include ninety students. Yet, it has since grown far beyond this original vision. According to Dr. Cynthia Wachtell, the director of the Honors program, there are approximately 160 honors students currently enrolled.

Rabbi Kenneth Brander, the vice president for University and Community Life of Yeshiva University, explained this financial change in context of the broader picture of the university.

49-million dollars for merit and needs based aid are distributed annually. With a third of that money going towards merit based aid, the university decided to analyze how to best allocate these funds, with assistance from Noel Levitz, a leading consultant in the field of university tuition. Following months of research, and taking into account the tuition discount rate of

52%, Noel Levitz helped the university come to the conclusion that the Early Decision and merit-based honors scholarship needed to be reduced.

Will this change in policy prove detrimental to the Honors program? Research indicates that the answer is no. Rabbi Brander explained, "Students want to join the honors program based on the quality of the program. They don't need to be 'bought-out' to join Yeshiva University."

These findings would seem to correspond with the fact that this year, 62 students out of the 63 that applied accepted their awarded early-decision scholarships at the reduced rate.

The Honors Program boasts an impressive event calendar, which this semester includes visits to Yeshiva University's Museum, Lincoln Center for a ballet, and Carnegie Hall. Honors students need not be concerned that the honors event will similarly suffer. According to Dr. Wachtell, the change in scholarships should not affect the quality of or amount of money spent on the honors events.

There is hope that the new policy will leave more funds for need-based scholarships. According to Rabbi Brander, lowering the scholarships "simply leaves more funds to give out to others in need of scholarship."

The Discontinuation of the Presidential Fellowship

Continued from page 1

were weekly seminars that feature speakers discussing a variety of topics from professional development to leadership roles and opportunities in the greater Jewish community. Beyond the valuable work experience, the fellows received a stipend for their contributions.

A current fellow and graduate from the class of 2013, Joanna Ross-Tash currently works in the Yeshiva University Museum. Her primary role at the museum is to serve as a liaison between the museum and the students, and in addition she serves as a teacher's assistant to Dr. Jacob Wisse's Introduction to Art class.

When asked for a comment regarding her reactions to the discontinuation of the program, Ross-Tash noted, "While I do believe the Presidential Fellowship is a valuable program, I think that the University is right to focus their attention on the undergraduate students. Hopefully, the Presidential Fellowship will be able to continue soon, but I do understand why it will be taking a hiatus next year." The President's office did not indicate any definite time in the future when the program

will be reinstated.

Although focusing attention on the undergraduate student body was a major emphasis in the explanation shared with students, current seniors who hoped to partake in the program next year are very disappointed.

One such senior, Hannah Rozenblat, was eager to participate in the fellowship next year. She saw it as a valuable opportunity for YU students who wish to continue being in the YU environment while gaining experience apropos to their future careers.

Rozenblat stated, "I was planning on applying for a fellowship that was directly related to the career I was interested in pursuing... I am disappointed because it is denying students like me a wonderful opportunity to be involved in YU."

Although YU's financial burdens are a matter of grave concern, this change is amongst the first cuts which turns the financial situation from mere speculation into a tangible reality for students. As seniors look for alternative plans for next year, the student body can only hope these type of cuts will not turn into a recurring trend.

Hadar Magazine: For the Stylish Orthodox Woman

Shayna Darling When discussing the sensitive subject of *halakhic* modesty, the mere mention of the words 'collarbone,' 'elbows' and 'knees' is daunting enough to elicit a wash of anxiety. However, for a select few creative fashionistas, these *halakhic* boundaries are channeled into motivation to express style and flair. This is exactly the approach that Shevi Genuth and Bari Weizman have taken. Their new magazine for women, *Hadar*, debuted in Fall 2013 and is a fashion magazine targeting the modest Jewish woman.

Many Orthodox women find it increasingly difficult to find fashion inspiration without compromising their comfort level and standard of modesty. They admire the current styles seen in *Vogue* or *Elle*, however, they cringe at the idea that these hip fashions would necessitate an altering of the hem or the addition of a Kiki Riki. For these frustrated women, *Hadar* magazine offers a great source of inspiration for the fashion forward Orthodox woman. *Hadar*, meaning 'beauty,' or 'splendor' in Hebrew, looks to current runway trends and makes adaptations for the *halakhically* conscious woman.

Hadar's publisher, Bari Weizman, is a graduate of Sy Syms School of Business. She majored in marketing and also completed the

Sy Syms Masters program in accounting. Shevi Genuth, *Hadar's* managing editor, graduated from Hunter College with a degree in English Literature. In addition to their work at *Hadar*, both women work in the telecommunications arena. After working together for three years, Weizman approached Genuth with a business plan: to start a fashion magazine for Orthodox women. Both women felt the need to fill a niche that had been lacking from the Orthodox world.

Because *Hadar* strives to keep up with trends of the mainstream fashion world, Weizman assures that all of the fashion featured in the magazine is from the new lines and seasons from up-and-coming designers. She credits fashion editor Jessica Gugenheim for her constant connections with public relations firms across the country, and adds that Gugenheim is constantly expanding on their press access to bring more trends and fashion to readers.

Hadar markets and promotes their modest trends through the use of social media. They use Facebook to interact with their readers, and to post about fashion-related topics. *Hadar* can also be found on Pinterest, a prime platform for women's fashion. *Hadar* pins the latest modest runway looks on their 'Designer Inspirations' board, which is one of many popular boards on their Pintrest.

FEATURES

ELANA KOOK
YAELE LASSON

Genuth explained that the goal of *Hadar* is two-fold. In addition to featuring the latest modest fashion, *Hadar* aims to acknowledge all that the Orthodox woman accomplishes in her busy life. Both Weizman and Genuth embody this balance. Weizman credits her experience at Stern for her current path in life. She says that Stern provided her with a variety of courses to take with excellent professors and offered her valuable life lessons. Weizman also notes that Stern provided her with the ability to network and make great connections. Its Midtown location gave her important internship opportunities, including a prestigious internship at *MTV*.

Weizman concluded with some parting advice for students: "Take advantage of all that YU has to offer and enjoy college life while you can...Figure out what it is that you want and go after it...that's what will differentiate you from everyone else."

laughteristhejam.blogspot.com



Did the Super Bowl Really Burst Scarlett Johansson's (Carbonated) Bubble?

Elana Kook High-definition televisions, fingers greased with buffalo wings, and body slams. It's that time of year again. For many, the Super Bowl is the epitome of their existence as die-hard football devotees. While for others, it is a time of true hometown pride. Last year, it was reported that over one hundred eight million viewers tuned in to watch the festivities. While football games typically have high viewer

ratings, this startling number tremendously supersedes the ratings of even the most highly anticipated season and post-season sport events. This jump in ratings can be justified by one captivating and extremely lucrative factor: Super Bowl commercials.

This year there is an extra reason not to change the channel after the referee blows the whistle. The highly popular products of

the Israeli company SodaStream International Ltd. has new representation: the alluring Scarlett Johansson. The advertisement features Scarlett Johansson highlighting the usage of the SodaStream machine. In the second half of the commercial, Johansson reappears wearing a revealing dress while sipping her israeli-made soda. However, Fox, the network host of this year's Super Bowl, did not like the advertisement. And not for the obvious assumptions that may be associated with an advertisement starring Scarlett Johansson turning a cup of seltzer into an object of her affection.

The Fox network initially banned the commercial for consumerist technicalities. At the end of the commercial, Johansson holds her cup of SodaStream seltzer and proclaims four short problematic words, "Sorry, Coke and Pepsi". Although it may have seemed like a simple utterance, Fox network officials worried that this short statement could potentially insult their major network benefactors. Although a Coca-Cola representative insisted that the corporation did not coerce Fox to ban the advertisement, the SodaStream representatives disgruntledly dropped the short line to please the network.

The shimmying antics and consumerist propaganda aside, the commercial has stirred controversy long before the utterance of those measly four words. When word had spread that Johansson would be the new spokeswoman

for SodaStream, she received major backlash from Palestinian activists and BDS supporters. SodaStream International Ltd. is a factory based corporation located in Maale Adumim, a settlement in the West Bank of Israel. The opposing activists are preaching that the SodaStream company is breaching the international law which prohibits trade in the settlements of Israel, in addition to making baseless claims that the SodaStream corporation is contributing to ongoing violations of human rights in the West Bank.

Although many celebrities would strive to maintain a positive reputation during such controversy, Scarlett Johansson has not compromised her values in the face of opposition. Prior to her role as SodaStream spokeswoman, Johansson acted as an ambassador for the anti-poverty group Oxfam for eight years. However, upon hearing of her deal with SodaStream, Oxfam was displeased with Johansson's decision, stating that the two groups have conflicting interests. While SodaStream manufactures goods in the West Bank, Oxfam has spoken out strongly against the existence of settlements. In correspondence to the similar agenda of BDS, Oxfam insists that the inhabitants of the West Bank blatantly violate human rights and are obstinate rivals in their mission against poverty. Despite Oxfam initially considering Johansson's supportive statements defending SodaStream, on January 30th Johansson decided to end her longstanding reign as their ambassador.

Despite all of this backlash, the commercial will air during the Super Bowl. Of all the controversial talk surrounding the commercial, the only amendment that will be made is the removal of the short line that seemed to bash Coke and Pepsi. This commercial symbolizes an achievement beyond the notable showcase of Israel's economic feats. This year, during Super Bowl XLVIII over one hundred million expected viewers will watch as they are introduced to a resilient new friend of Israel, Scarlett Johansson.



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What You Need to Know About This Year's State of the Union

Abigail Bachrach On January 28, 2014, President Barack Obama delivered his sixth State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress that was broadcasted to the nation. The annual speech was accessible in more ways than ever before, including a live stream available online and on the White House mobile application.

The State of the Union Address is steeped in historical roots. In the Constitution it states, "From time to time give to the Congress information of the state of the union, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient." However, President Woodrow Wilson, opted for an oral form of the address, unlike the written messages of his predecessors dating back to President Thomas Jefferson. This changed the nature of the report and adapted it to the modern form of the State of the Union speech familiar today.

The speech is the President's chance to outline his legislative agenda for the coming year.

So, why listen? Issues such as the student debt crisis, a fair economy and minimum wage, health care, and women in the workplace were all aspects the speech addresses and are especially prevalent to Stern College for Women students. If that reason alone does not appeal to you, then at least watching the State of the Union address can help you when a college professor, family member, or a future employer addresses the following issues, and you will be prepared with something to insightful say.

President Obama called for this year to be a "year of action". Here's what you need to know from this year's State of the Union and why it should matter to you:

1. Minimum Wage - For over a year, President Obama has been unsuccessful in making the call to raise the current minimum wage, \$7.25 since 2009, to \$10.10 an hour. This year, he announced that he will soon be issuing an order to raise the minimum wage for employees of federal contractors. This, however, only matters for new contracts, and according to

House Speaker John Boehner, it will not affect any current contracts. However this marks a success in the ongoing battle of workers, plenty of whom are college students working minimum-wage salary jobs. "Say yes. Give America a raise", Obama implored Congress, stating that this particular issue will be in the forefront of his agenda for the forthcoming year.

2. Women - In a Millennial-worthy quote, Obama stated, "It is time to do away with policies that belong in a Mad Men episode." The quote went viral almost immediately, generating according to the Twitter official blog, 3,555 Tweets per minute*. Obama was referencing to his previous statement that led to a standing ovation from everyone inside the House of Representatives. "Women make up about half of our workforce," he stated, "But they still make 77 cents for every dollar a man earns. That is wrong, and in 2014 it's an embarrassment." He called for this coming year "to give every woman the opportunity she deserves" and continued, "...I firmly believe when women succeed, America succeeds."

3. Obamacare - Healthcare may or may not be an issue pertinent to you, but at this point, the only way to not have heard of Obamacare is if you were living under a rock. Aside from the repercussions within the Affordable Care Act that will affect everyone's health plans, whether they like it or not, the battle waged between Congress and Obama and Republicans versus Democrats on this particular issue has been monumental. In fact, specifically regarding healthcare, President Obama said, "I do not expect to convince my Republican friends on the merit of this law" and he continued to say that the Affordable Care Act is "here to stay." While there was barely a mention of the healthcare.gov fiasco, when the website's initial launch was met with major setbacks and failures on the site, the President defended the benefits of the new law and beseeched Americans to seek coverage by March 31. He also said, "Already, because of the Affordable Care Act, more than three million Americans under age 26 have gained coverage under their parents' plans." If you are under the

age of 26, then this directly affects you.

4. Education - As a college student, the cost of education could not be more directly pertinent to your everyday life. Unfortunately, President Obama did not say much on relief for student loan debt, and only said, "We worked with lenders to reform student loans, and today, more young people are earning college degrees than ever before." However he reaffirmed prior promises on education, focusing on teaching skills for the economy and future careers, Internet connectivity for students, and making pre-K available to any four-year-old. The President said; "The bottom line is, Michelle and I want every child to have the same chance this country gave us." Additionally, Obama said that he and Vice President Joe Biden have been working on creating training programs and apprenticeships to "train Americans with the skills employers need, and match them to good jobs that need to be filled right now."

5. The NSA - It is equally important to note the things that President Obama did not, or only minimally, address. One such weighty issue is surveillance program which is relevant to anyone who uses a cell phone or Google. The mention was prompted by the media uproar due to the former NSA contractor Edward Snowden's release of confidential documents that revealed the scope of the global surveillance run by the agency. In the State of the Union, Obama briefly spoke of his plan to work with Congress on reform, but did not elaborate.

6. Foreign Policy - Another matter that took a backseat in the address was America's relationship with other countries, and only came much later in the speech. Obama said he aims to "complete our mission" in Afghanistan by the year's end. The President focused on diplomacy and negotiation, stating he "will not send our troops into harm's way unless it is truly necessary," and a powerful statement that brought a round of strong applause, "We must fight the battles that need to be fought, not those that terrorists prefer from us." He then credited and praised

American diplomacy in various issues such as helping slow Iran's nuclear program and the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria. Israel, a topic relevant to Yeshiva students, was included too. "As we speak, American diplomacy is supporting Israelis and Palestinians...to achieve dignity and an independent state for Palestinians and lasting peace and security for the state of Israel - a Jewish state that knows America will be at their side." Applause followed this statement.

7. Miscellaneous - Other issues that were stressed in the speech included fixing the "broken immigration system", the significance of renewable energy and fighting climate change, the creation of jobs, and how important technology and innovation are. Other topics which were mentioned in only one or two sentences included gun reform. The government shutdown and gay rights reform were omitted.

It is important to remember that what is said in the State of the Union address is an outline of what is to come. The most pressing thing to do is to find the issues that are pertinent to you. You can locate information on the topics of your choice either on this page, the complete transcript of the address using the link below, or simply searching the topic of your choice followed by the words "state of the union 2014" or even "sotu 2014", and then see what your President plans to do with that topic in the near future.

And while you do that, note that while you search the topic of your choice, the light that shines above your computer contributes to climate change and that your healthcare plan makes it possible to get medicine with the flu going around. Know that you are a female college student who will one day or maybe already is employed, and care very much about minimum wage and your status as a woman in the workplace. Finally, realize, that the President of the United States is speaking about things that pertain not just to Congress, or any other citizen, but you.

'Nothing is Impossible:' A Look Into the Life of Sam Berns

Devi Braun Leslie and Scott Berns, both pediatricians, quickly noticed that there was something wrong with their baby boy, Sam. At 22 months, Sam was diagnosed with Progeria, a rare genetic disorder that causes the overproduction of the protein Progerin. The main symptom of this disease is rapid aging at a young age. As of now, no treatment has been proven effective to aid to those with Progeria. However, Sam's parents would not accept the dim news when they were told nothing could be done to help their son. Out of their eagerness to find a cure, they founded the Progeria Research Foundation, which soon paved the way for a trial of the first-ever attempted treatment for the disease. To no avail, the Jewish teen died on January 10th at the age of 17.

Before he passed away, Sam Berns made it clear that he would not let any disease stop him from achieving his goals and was determined to live a full life. Sam was a part of the high school marching band, he went to homecoming, and built entire Lego towns. He earned middle school awards and had dreams of going to MIT to become an inventor.

Sam was an ordinary boy with high ambitions. Weighing only 50 pounds, he lived an unusually long life for a child with Progeria. He and 28 other patients were part of a trial by the Progeria Research Foundation, which used a drug that

is used to treat patients with cancer. The drug seemed to lessen the stiffness in the joints in the Progeria patients.

Progeria has a very low incidence rate, only 1 in 8 million people are affected, and today only 200 children worldwide are carriers of the disease. Progeria is rarely inherited because patients do not live long enough to have children of their own. The average lifespan of carriers of Progeria is thirteen years. Symptoms for Progeria are usually developed within the first few months of life. Symptoms include: a failure



news.nationalgeographic.com

to thrive, scleroderma-like skin conditions, limited body growth, wrinkled skin, hair loss, kidney failure, loss of eyesight, a small fragile body, an inability to gain weight, and musculoskeletal degeneration including joint stiffness. Carriers of the disease are also

more prone to osteoporosis and heart attacks. Children with Progeria have a distinctive appearance of a small face, pinched nose, and shallow recessed jaw.

Life According to Sam is the documentary that was made a few years ago, sharing Sam Berns with the world. It was even voted the best documentary at the 2013 Boston Jewish Film Festival. By making Progeria a public struggle, Sam found that had the ability to make the world more aware of his disease. With his captivating speeches and intelligent thoughts, Berns was

able to mesmerize society with his ethics and determination not to let his disease define him.

He became an icon throughout Boston. Many people were fascinated with Sam's story and his positive attitude, including the entire Boston community and many sports teams. The owner of the New England Patriots, Robert Kraft, took a special interest in this young warrior. Sam was supposed to have been the honorary captain at the Patriots' playoff game, but instead a moment of silence was held in his memory.

Sam Berns was a child who had a special philosophy on life. He did not dwell on what he could not do. Instead, living by his motto, "nothing is impossible," Sam found ways to do it all. His story will continue to be an inspiration for many years to come. Sam Berns has shown that optimism is the key to closed doors and that challenges are just small mountains one must climb over.

When asked by an interviewer, "What is the most important thing people should know about you?" Sam responded, "I have a very happy life."

Bravery in a Complex Time: Remembering Ariel Sharon



Makena Owens January 11, 2014 marks the tragic passing of former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Sharon's health began declining at the end of 2005 when he suffered a minor stroke, followed by another stroke less than a month later. After spending eight years in a coma-like state, Sharon passed away at the age of eighty-five at Tal HaShomer Hospital near Tel Aviv.

Sharon was born on a moshav in Kfar Malal in August of 1928 under the British Mandate of Palestine. He was introduced to the concept of homeland defense early in his teenage years, participating in night watches on the moshav and later enlisting in a youth battalion. At the climax of the 1948 War of Independence, Sharon entered the Israeli Defense Force. He firmly believed that Israel had been too hesitant in the face of Arab adversity, and was determined to impart some of his fearless persistence in his fellow soldiers. Sharon's relentlessness was made especially clear during the 1967 Six Day War when he was appointed to defend Israel's southern border against Egypt. He led the country to a massive victory: Israel gained the Sinai Peninsula and also defeated Egypt, Syria, and Jordan—three of its most prominent antagonists. Sharon often referred to this moment as one unparalleled in his entire life. His passion was protecting the

State of Israel, and success in this endeavor gave him the most gratification.

Even as a young soldier, Sharon was known for defying orders from his superiors and acting on his own accord—a trait that was visible in other situations throughout his life. While he was often criticized for this behavior, his defiance and independence also worked in Israel's favor. During the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Sharon accomplished his greatest military success. Acting as head of the IDF's Armored Reserve Division, he courageously sent his troops across the Suez Canal into Egypt. While the maneuver disobeyed repeated orders from IDF officials, it was considered the turning point in the war. By crossing the Suez Canal, Sharon's men completely thwarted the Egyptian Second Army and surrounded its Third Army, essentially winning the war for Israel on the ground.

After 25 years in the IDF, Sharon joined the Likud party and began his political career. He always maintained a clear stance that his priority was the preservation and further development of a Jewish homeland in Israel. His years of military experiences certainly affected his politics—as a political leader, Sharon aggressively seized opportunities that he believed would foster peace between Israelis and Palestinians. These perceived opportunities often led to bold decisions that inevitably affected his popularity both internationally and in Israel. In 1982 when Sharon announced a 48-hour invasion on Lebanon to root out the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), he did so with the intention of negotiating a peace treaty between Lebanon and Israel. The invasion successfully sparked an alliance between the IDF and the Palestinian Phalangists. But the later decision to allow the Phalange into Beirut ultimately led to the Sabra and Shalita massacre,

and most of the world blamed Sharon alone. He was subsequently removed as Defense Minister but remained on the cabinet without portfolio.

Despite his ejection and dive in popularity, Sharon returned to politics in 2001 as Prime Minister of Israel in an unbelievable victory over Ehud Barak. He consistently drew from his experiences as a soldier to guide political decisions, and firmly believed in Israel's ability as a unified country to succeed against its enemies as it had done in the past.

When Sharon was elected, tensions were particularly high between Israelis and Palestinians. In 2003, he grew impatient with the Palestinians for their lack of cooperation in negotiating agreements with Israel, and announced his ultimate plan to advance his desire for peace: the "Disengagement Plan." This would remove settlers from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in an effort to reduce Israeli/Palestinian animosity by significantly decreasing the number of Israelis in the area. In 2005, the IDF evacuated thousands of Israeli settlers, and the army was officially out of Gaza for the first time in 38 years. While many Israelis in

fact agreed that the plan had been successful, Sharon's Likud party condemned his decision. In late 2005 he abandoned Likud to start a new party called Kadima, which he insisted would eliminate all terrorist obstacles, maximize Israeli security, and ensure a Jewish state. Just one month after establishing Kadima, Sharon suffered his first stroke, and his health continued declining until his death.

Ariel Sharon was a man known for always making his opinions clear. In his autobiography, *Warrior*, Sharon asked a burning question: "Can the Jewish people of Israel find within us the will to survive as a nation?" He believed that this will existed as long as Jews remained strongly unified. He exemplified the fight it takes to preserve Israel as a Jewish homeland. World leaders have recognized Sharon's tenacity and bravery throughout his life, and will continue to admire his courage for years to come.




www.cnn.com Page by Mariano Castillo · Ariel Sharon addresses troops of Unit 101 before their attack on Khan Yunis in what was formerly known as the Gaza Strip on August 30, 1955.

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HEALTH CORNER



The Ultimate Showdown: Tea Vs. Coffee

Odeya Durani If you survey the hot cups of students at Stern, you will find a university divided into two camps: the coffee drinkers and the tea drinkers. Members of both groups are vehemently opposed to starting their morning off with the competing beverage and are steadfast in their support of either coffee or tea. It is rare to find someone who is open to both. The debate rages on, leaving us to wonder which beverage is the better way to start the day?

Coffee is most appreciated for its caffeine content, which is often viewed as a magic ingredient that allows tired students to function. Caffeine is known for its ability to increase alertness and reaction time. It enhances performance and endurance in the physically active, and memory in the sleep deprived. Caffeine consumed in moderation has also been linked to a heightened sense of well-being, sociability, and overall happiness. A typical cup of coffee contains sixty milligrams of caffeine, which is definitely a hefty portion of caffeine. However, a cup of tea contains approximately fifty milligrams of caffeine. Therefore, the

caffeine boost that is the cornerstone of our "wake-up" process every morning can be induced almost equally by the consumption of tea or coffee.

While caffeine is foremost in the minds of the majority of students each morning, their physical appearance also ranks high on their lists of daily concerns. Tea is famous for its positive effects in regard to skin health and appearance, but the beautifying effects of coffee are largely ignored. Coffee is a vasoconstrictor and has the ability to reduce the appearance of dark circles and puffy eyes. Both coffee and tea have the power to make dull hair shine. New research also suggests that coffee may smooth cellulite, while ancient Indian remedies recommend coffee to tighten and brighten skin.

Vanity aside, both tea and coffee can play an integral role in maintaining one's health. Tea has a reputation of being packed with antioxidants, but coffee contains twice as many of these same phytochemicals per cup. Antioxidants protect healthy tissue from harmful free radicals, which have been linked to many diseases. It follows

that both tea and coffee can play a substantial role in keeping you healthy.

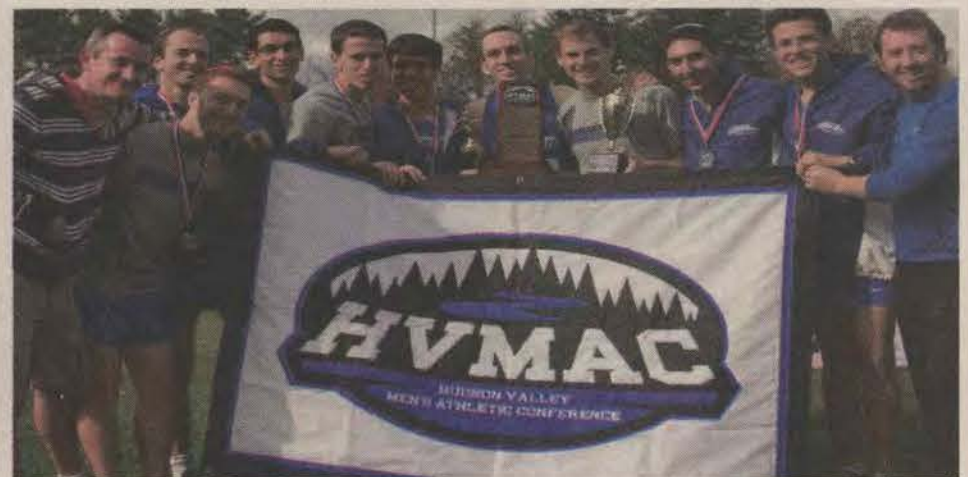
Studies suggest that that regular consumption of tea can protect against a wide range of cancers, heart disease, stroke, gum disease, osteoporosis, Parkinson's disease, liver damage, and Type I diabetes. Coffee has also been purported to boast a wide range of other healthful effects including protection against Type II Diabetes, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, gallstones, colon cancer, skin cancer, endometrial cancer, liver cirrhosis, and even indigestion. Furthermore, for those concerned with overeating, coffee is a known appetite suppressant. However, tea can also help you with your quest to lose weight; it has been proven to increase metabolism rates. Equally important is the role that both tea and coffee play with regard to your mental health. Drinking either one of these super-beverages correlates to lower risks of depression and levels of stress.

While both beverages clearly play a role in increasing overall quality of life,

it must be noted that this article does not encourage a trip to Starbucks for a Frappuccino or Duane Reade for Snapple. The milk, cream, sugar, and syrups that are often added to coffee may outweigh the benefits of the coffee bean whose beneficial effects are often already lowered by intense processing. Similarly, the addition of milk has been proven to negate many of the healthful properties of tea and the added sugar also detracts from one's health. Furthermore, the definition of true tea is limited to offshoots of green, black, and white tea leaves, and thus many herbal and fruit teas cannot boast the aforementioned effects. Still, drinking cups of both tea and coffee in their true form provides equally viable ways to start your morning, maintain an easy beauty regiment, and ensuring improved overall health. There is no need to keep Camp Coffee and Camp Tea separate, and students are encouraged to embrace the two beverages.



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Never Stop Running: A Cross-Country Update

Stephanie Greenberg The fall semester of 2014 may seem far away to most Yeshiva University students. However, to the cross-country runners, fall 2014 is right around the corner. After a tremendous performance by both the men and women's teams this past fall Season, the only place these runners are headed is to the top. In order to achieve these high goals, the training needs to start early. No, we are not talking summer, which is already months in advance—we're talking spring. The extra months of spring training during the non-traditional cross-country season aims to boost the fitness level of the runners in order to lead them into the upcoming traditional

season. Speaking from the women's point of view, the lady runners dedicated countless hours to training last season and managed to produce Stern Cross-Country's best results yet. After finishing first in HVWAC championship, and third in Skyline, the ladies aim to repeat the first victory and up their place at the Skyline meet. Spring training may just be the extra push we need to accomplish these goals.

The cross-country spring training this year is different than any training from years before because it could potentially include two meets in April. The competitiveness of these meets will inspire the cross-country team members to push themselves to the

limit during spring training. These meets will not just include the 5k distance in which our cross-country runners are used to competing, but smaller distances that range from 800 meters to 5k. Preparation for these meets would require tough speed workouts and the implementation of strategies that would be helpful for runners to use during their traditional cross-country season competitions as well.

While the current members of the cross-country team and their spring training efforts are instrumental to our upcoming season, we unfortunately have key runners graduating this May. It is important for underclassmen

to build the foundations for the team. So if you are interested in keeping this dynasty alive, and being part of a championship team next season, then let your training begin! If you are interested in joining this amazing team next season, it would be wise to start training now. This way you will have plenty of time to build up the speed and stamina that is necessary to become a contributing member of our top-notch team. Yes, early morning wake-ups and long intense runs may seem like a daunting beginning, but it only leads to greatness: you will get in great shape, make great friends, and be part of a great team.

Light and Shadows: The Story of Iranian Jews

Michal Kaplan-Nadel The famous story of Esther and Mordechai begins the complicated and fascinating history of Jews living in Iran. Far from being a remote story told only on Purim, to Iranian Jews Esther is the quintessential heroic figure who saved the Jews from one of

the many persecutions they would face for years to come. Pilgrimages to her tomb, amulets, and beautiful depictions of *Megillat Esther* pay tribute to Esther's greatness. This is how "Light and Shadows: The Story of Iranian Jews", a recent exhibit at the YU Museum, begins. The exhibit was created and organized by Beit Hatfusot - The museum of the Jewish People - in Tel Aviv. It is presented in partnership with the American Sephardi Foundation and is on view until April 27, 2014.

Life for Iranian Jews was often very difficult. In the early 16th century the Safavid kingdom rose to power and established a strict Shiite Islamic doctrine, which discriminated against Iran's religious minorities. For the Jews who lived in the mahale, the Jewish quarter, there were many strict rules. One seemingly outrageous law, that Jews could not wear matching shoes, stood out to me in its depiction in a colorful drawing on the wall. In the mid 1800's many Jews were forced to convert to Islam. Of these Jews, many lived double-lives, practicing their Judaism privately and living publicly as Muslims. In order to prevent marriages of their children to Muslim partners, many families married off their children at very



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young ages. The dresses of these child-brides, heartbreakingly small in size, are visual proof of the difficult times.

Despite persecution, the Jews of Iran led a rich and vibrant cultural life. Because the Jews were considered "people of the book" who valued literacy, they were vital in preserving much of Persian literature, including books and poetry. Additionally, music was a strong element of their culture, as is evidenced by the traditional instruments, for example those called a *târ*, *setâr*, and *santû*, encased in the middle of the room. Traditional Persian music plays from speakers filling the exhibit.

In addition to their love of music and art, the Iranian Jews had deep spiritual and religious roots that are preserved through their religious artifacts. The marriage contracts are embroidered with vibrant colors, the standing torah covers are intricate works of art in jewel tones, and engraved silver amulets were said to keep away harm and to protect young mothers, newborn babies, and others who may



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have been vulnerable.

The exhibit closes with a portrait of Iranian Jewish life in modern times. Over 25,000 Jews remain in the Jewish community of Iran, now able to practice their religious freedom. Many have immigrated to parts of the United States and Israel, all the while preserving their strong roots to their cultural traditions. All in all, "Light and Shadows" portrays a full picture of Iranian Jewish life, both in its trials as well as its triumphs.

Exhibit Talk: Edgar Allan Poe at the Morgan

Hannah Rozenblat Although Edgar Allan Poe left behind a wide and impressive collection of works when he died at the age of forty, most readers know little about his life unless they actively try to learn about it. His short stories and poems are usually allowed to speak for themselves, earning him a reputation as one of America's most important writers of the mystery and macabre. Recently, the Morgan Museum in Midtown Manhattan hosted an exhibit of Poe's letters and manuscripts, shedding light on the reclusive writer's personal life and professional endeavors.

In "Edgar Allan Poe: Terror of the Soul," which closed on January 26th, the Morgan displayed an impressive collection of handwritten items from Poe, drawn primarily from their own collections as well as from the New York Public Library. For Edgar Allan Poe fans, the exhibit provided a fascinating view at Poe's work.

Handwritten manuscripts of poems such as "Dreams," "The Lake," and "The Spirits of the Dead" from 1828 were on view, as well as published editions of Poe's early works, such as "Tamerlane and Other Poems," a pamphlet published in 1827 when Poe was eighteen and primarily containing poems he wrote at the age of fourteen - an impressive detail that highlights the writer's recognizable talent at an early age.

Poe's letters serve to both illuminate his personal life and provide a commentary on his poetry. Although in

one letter, Poe transcribed a copy for "Ulalume" for a woman at her request and wrote that he will not bother to explain the poem further since he believes it is best to allow the reader to interpret it, in a letter to George W. Eveleth, the first major student of Poe's work, Poe explained "The Raven," a rare look into the writer's thinking process.

Aside from the objects themselves, examining Poe's elegant, decorative handwriting is interesting as well. His letters and poems are written in a tiny neat script, while some of his short stories are written in an experimental handwriting resembling a printed font.

But although the exhibit's collection of letters and manuscripts was impressive, it

could have benefitted from artifacts from Poe and more contextual information on his life to provide a more complete picture of the writer. The Morgan's previous exhibits on writers such as Charles Dickens provided this sort of intimate glance at a writer's personal life, which this exhibit was unfortunately sometimes lacking. Nonetheless, the letters and manuscripts that were exhibited, along with the reactions of later writers and important figures, provided a look at Poe that readers do not often have.

Furthermore, the exhibit portrayed Poe's relationship to both past and future writers. A letter from Charles Dickens to Poe showed that Poe correctly guessed in his review of Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* how the murder mystery would be resolved. In later editions of the novel, Dickens hid the clues that Poe had identified to make it less easy for readers to solve the mystery.

Later writers were also influenced by Poe, such as Vladimir Nabokov, who included allusions to Poe in his works, and Oscar Wilde, who visited one of the houses in which Poe had lived to see the room where Poe allegedly wrote "The Raven." Allen Ginsberg, one of the most visionary poets of our generation, wrote that all literary art can be traced back to Poe's influence.

The effect of Poe's writing on readers and writers alike is undeniable, and the Morgan Museum brought the experience to visitors in this detailed, text-oriented exhibit.



theboweryboys.blogspot.com

Museum Talk: Dutch Masterpieces from the Mauritshuis



Hannah Rozenblat New York's Frick Museum had a very special visitor recently: *The Girl with a Pearl Earring* graced its walls. The highly-regarded painting is on loan from the Mauritshuis museum in the Netherlands, along with a collection of other paintings from the Mauritshuis, highlighting its collection through a carefully crafted exhibit titled *Vermeer, Rembrandt, and Hals: Masterpieces of Dutch Painting from the Mauritshuis*, which closed on January 19th.

The Girl with a Pearl Earring was clearly the highlight of the exhibit, displayed by itself in the Frick's Oval Room and always surrounded by a crowd of people vying for the best spot in order to gaze at the painting firsthand. Prints and reproductions fail to do justice to the actual *Girl With a Pearl Earring*, a fact that became quite clear when I found myself face to face with Vermeer's most famous portrait, admiring that certain glow that she had, which I had never noticed before with such force.

Explanatory material displayed in the Oval Room along with the painting shed light on the cleaning process of the painting and what it unveiled. Conservation treatment in 1994 revealed that some of the details of the painting were actually not as Vermeer had intended

but rather happened over time. For example, some of the subtle highlighting on the girl's lip had been overpainted during previous treatments and was finally uncovered so as to present the painting as the artist originally intended it to appear. Another thing that was discovered during treatment was that Vermeer put translucent green paint over a dark underpaint for the background of the painting – this background, however, appears black to us because of the discoloration of the pigments over time.

In the adjacent East Gallery, other paintings from the Dutch Golden Age were displayed, including Nicholas Maes's *Old Lacemaker*, Jan Steen's *Girl Eating Oysters* and "As the Old Sing, So Pipe the Young," Gerard ter Borch's *Woman Writing a Letter*, Jacob van

Ruisdael's *View of Haarlem with Bleaching Grounds*, and four paintings by Rembrandt, including *Portrait of an Elderly Man and Susana*, a classic Biblical scene from the Book of Daniel. Frans Hals's *Portrait of Aletta Hanemans* was particularly attention-grabbing due to the artist's meticulous attention to detail in his depiction of the lady's dress, with ornate gold trimmings that contributed a tactile quality to the painting, making the trimmings seem as if they were popping out of the painting.

The Frick, which does not generally experience long lines or waits, found itself crowded to capacity as a result of the exhibit, whose popularity meant that visitors had to wait in line sometimes for hours to purchase a ticket. Timed tickets were instituted in response to the exhibit's popularity but were quickly sold out online, remaining available only at the museum. However, this did not deter the crowds of people looking to see the famed *Girl with a Pearl Earring* in person.

Although the considerable crowds and timed tickets detracted from the experience of the exhibit, the exhibit allowed New Yorkers to finally view this impressive collection of Dutch masterpieces, an opportunity that many have been dreaming of for years.

Walter Mitty Teaches Valuable Lessons About Living an Extraordinary Life

Emily Chase After he is unable to "send a wink" to a woman on eHarmony, Walter Mitty calls an eHarmony employee, Todd, who notices the emptiness of Mitty's profile and comments that the "been there done that" section is blank. "Have you done anything noteworthy, mentionable?" There is silence on the other line, as Mitty imagines himself jumping heroically into a burning building until he is jolted back into reality by a passing train. *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* portrays the story of a man who dreams of exploring the world while doing great and noble acts, yet is confined by his inability to transform his dreams into reality.

Like many of us, Walter Mitty, played by Ben Stiller, feels a disconnect between who he is and who he wants to be. Mitty is known to zone-out constantly throughout the day. He fantasizes about bridging this gap and becoming an idealized version of himself, someone who is courageous and creative. In those dreams, everything seems so easy, the right words flowing effortlessly into the perfect punch lines and his fearful hesitation instantly replaced by bravery and action. If he cannot live a more exciting life, at least he can pretend. These dreams allow him to create his own perfect life, even if only for a moment.

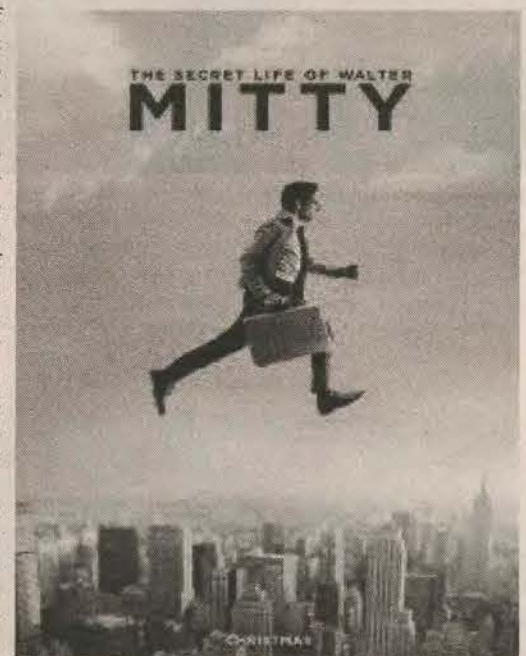
After his father died, Mitty worked to support his mother and sister. He eventually got a job working for *Life* magazine, where he processed pictures. Here the audience sees the contrast between the photos of love, hope, death, tragedy, beauty and Walter Mitty, a sad, lonely man, sitting in a dark room filled with pictures of other people's grand lives. He may have been breathing and eating, but he wasn't living in the fullest sense of the word. He was too scared or too comfortable to try to be different—until he is called upon to act.

As he runs down the hallway to his mission, he passes posters of *Life* magazine covers that feature great people. As he nears the end, the camera pauses on the last poster, a picture of himself with the title "Making of a Brave Man." When put up to

the challenge, Walter Mitty realizes his own hidden potential. As he travels from adventure to adventure, he takes with him the travel book his dad gave him as a kid, which he had left empty.

Overall, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* is a captivating movie. Stiller draws the audience to empathize with his character and root for him throughout the adventure. Sean Penn also does an excellent job as Sean O'Connell, the daring photojournalist, who unintentionally sends Mitty on his adventure. In addition, the winsome plot, beautiful thematic music, and magnificent landscapes largely contribute to the thrill of the movie. Throughout Mitty's quest, the audience will enjoy the breathtaking scenes of nature.

Though he thought greatness was only in his dreams, Mitty found out that he was something great all along. The movie summons us to question our acceptance of life the way it is, and challenges us to turn our dreams into realities. We only live once—let's live it beautifully.



Leaving their Panties on the Floor: Girls' Portrayal of the Nude

Mia Guttman On January 12th, the latest season of *Girls* premiered. For those of you unfamiliar with the show, it's a program focused on four friends in their twenties-somethings living in New York City. Since the show's premier in 2012 it has faced some criticism for its seemingly excessive nudity. The main character, Hannah Horvath, played by Lena Dunham, is naked in many episodes. The issue of nudity has also become a discussion because Dunham does not have what one might call the "ideal" body. While some have found her pride and confidence to be inspiring and refreshing others have deemed it vulgar.

The topic became particularly heated during a panel discussion with actors and producers from *Girls* at the Television Critics Association winter press tour. One reporter, Tim Molloy from *The Wrap*, stated "I don't get the purpose of all of the nudity on the show, by you particularly (in reference to Dunham), and I feel like I'm walking into a trap where you go,

'Nobody complains about the nudity on *Game of Thrones*,' but I get why they are doing it... they are doing it to be salacious and, you know, titillate people. And your character is often naked just at random times for no reason."

The conversation escalated quickly and Judd Apatow, an executive producer of the show took particular offense to the comment and rightfully so. Dunham responded to Molloy that the nudity is included "because it's a realistic expression of what it's like to be alive." She further stated that "if you are not into me, that's your problem, and you are going to have to kind of work that out with whatever professionals you've hired."

Whether or not nudity on television is appropriate is not the question at play. The issue seems to be that Lena Dunham's nudity is not for the sexual appeal of the audience and therefore has no place on television. Shows like *Game of Thrones* and *Shameless* are using nudity to "titillate people," while Dunham is

merely depicting day to day life. Begging the question: why should a woman be naked on television unless she is doing so to sexually arouse viewers?

Girls is attempting to be a realistic portrayal of young adults, Dunham is naked because she is changing clothes, going to the bathroom or occasionally just because not everyone wears pants all the time. These images may be jarring, but they are depictions of our day to day lives. Some people may find this nudity unnecessary, but fans of the show and Dunham, see it as a gritty portrayal of life. In one scene this season a new addition to the cast, Gaby Hoffman, was depicted naked from the waist down during a mental breakdown. In the scene Hoffman is standing in the bathroom holding a glass cup which she intentionally shatters into her own palm. Hoffman's nudity might appear superfluous to some, but the nudity added to the raw and disturbing quality of the scene. And if viewers didn't completely

understand the scene, it at least led to a lively discussion.

Beyond reclaiming the nude from the clutches of eroticism, Dunham is also changing the notion of who should be naked on television. Dunham, who has tattoos and is consistently thirteen pounds overweight was not made in the image of a Barbie doll. Despite these facts she is beautiful and her "excessive" nudity on the show is providing a positive image for women who don't have the "perfect" body. *Girls'* strong, in-your-face visual approach is demonstrating that female nudity is not meant to simply uphold the sexual fantasies of men or women.

Perhaps Lena, a young writer and actress, is going to revolutionize how audiences perceive the female nude. Dunham may not be "the voice of our generation," but she most certainly is "a voice of our generation." Shouldn't we be receptive and allow Lena to show us her point of view?

Correspondences

— Yael Roberts



Installation view of Diego Rivera and Georgia O'Keeffe



Installation view of Alice Liddell and Lewis Carroll



Crowd at the January 21 Reception



Installation view of Self-Portrait



Crowd at the January 21 Reception

Yael Roberts is a senior at Stern studying English Literature and Studio Art. This January, she will exhibit her first solo show, "Correspondences."

"Correspondences" explores the idea of inspiration by looking at the relationships between artist-muse couples in the 19th and 20th century: Lewis Carroll and Alice Liddell, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddal, Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz, and Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. The exhibition is an installation of 9 lithographic portraits, created from postal art. The artwork is based on the letters and diaries of the 8 historical figures, and on the correspondences of the artist over the past year about inspiration with friends and famous artists and writers.

A reception was held during a snowy winter night on January 21, but some YU students braved the storm and came out to the show. Here are some pictures of the artwork and the reception.

See more of Yael Roberts's work at <http://yaelroberts.daportfolio.com/>

OPINIONS

RACHEL RENZ
SHOSHANA BACHRACH

Am I Nerdy Enough? An Insider's Tale of the SciFi/ FantaSciFi Clubs at YU



Sarala Pool It was a rainy evening, and I was absentmindedly meandering after the nerd bandwagon, trying to decide if I should jump on. I was sitting on my roommate's bed as I contemplated attending an event for the first time on campus. It was a showing of the

animated movie *Wreck It Ralph*, hosted by the Sci-Fi/FantaSciFi Clubs. After all, who doesn't like some good Fantasy and Sci-Fi. Give me a wizard over a quarterback and a dragon over a fancy car any day. I prefer time travel to jet-setting and orcs to vicious cheerleaders. However (and here comes the confession), I am not a *Star Wars* fan, and while I have watched and thoroughly enjoyed every episode of the new series of *Doctor Who*, I am incapable of quoting any lines back to you. So as I sat there, idly musing, I was worried that perhaps I wasn't the

right kind of nerdy for the Sci-Fi/FantaSciFi Clubs.

The Sci-Fi Club was co-founded by Rotem Elias and David Rabbani because, simply put, they were tired of attending events that were all speeches and no fun. They decided to create the

Sci-Fi club with the intention of holding events where people could have fun and meet others interested in the same geeky stuff that they were. The following year, current SCW seniors, Malka Sigal and Aliza Katzin, teamed up and created the FantaSciFi club on the Stern Campus. The two clubs have since joined forces and work together to create fun and exciting events.

Every semester the clubs choose a theme. In fall of 2012 the theme was time travel. Ever wondered how exactly time travel might work? After screening three movies about time travel, the clubs invited a physics lab technician to speak about the possibility of time travel. In spring of 2013, the theme chosen was unconventional heroes. That semester featured one of their most popular events, a showing of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Those who attended were sorted into different houses by the Sorting Hat. Eli Shavalian, YC '14, brought twigs in from outdoors and whittled wands for those who wished to try their hand at magic. Malka Sigal, or should I say Madama Rosmerta, served Butterbeer to the weary students. All were invited to dress up as they saw fit, and attendees were privileged enough to bump into Ron Weasley, whisper about Harry Potter behind his back, roll their eyes at Hermione Granger, scuttle hurriedly away from Snape, and even marvel at Tonks' bright blue hair.

The Sci-Fi/FantaSciFi Clubs events bring in a huge crowd. This year, the zombie event this past fall attracted over sixty Stern and Yeshiva College students. Students came dressed in

their zombie best, with blood and gore galore. The club's book swap event, which was held in conjunction with the Fiction Book Club, was a huge success, and attracted more people than expected. The event was accompanied by a dramatic reading of *Shakespeare's Star Wars*, a book by Ian Doescher. Students played the roles of Luke, Leia, Han Solo and others, all the while speaking in a "Shakespearean" dialect.

There is a reason the Sci-Fi/FantaSciFi Clubs events are some of the most widely attended events on campus. Rochela Neiman, Vice President, explained: "The Sci-Fi/FantaSciFi Club lets everyone know that it's perfectly okay to be ridiculously enthusiastic about what you love...anything goes and everything is cool. ...We encourage people to embrace that which makes them unique and to fly their fandom flags high. We also encourage people to express themselves and meet people in brilliant new ways. We're important because we matter to people. We make everyone feel welcome and wanted."

After much cajoling by my roommates, I took the leap. Despite my confidence that I would be treated to all the perks of being a wallflower, I had a fantastic time. I had been worried that I would have nobody to talk to – but I had such a good time that I started showing up to all their events. Eventually, I successfully petitioned to be a member of the board. The lesson here, folks? Next time you're feeling a little nerdy, why not feel nerdy among friends?

The Faces Behind the Epithets: My Winter Vacation at Chovevei and Maharat

Rivka Hia After finishing my last final, as my friends boarded planes for sunny beaches, I took the 1 train to Riverdale, home of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah (Chovevei) housed at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale (HIR), affectionately known as "The Bayit" to its congregants. For my winter vacation, I decided to join Chovevei and Yeshivat Maharat rabbinical schools in their collegiate winter weeks of learning. As per their respective websites, Chovevei trains men to be open modern Orthodox rabbis and Maharat ordains women as halakhic decision-making members of the clergy, the first institution to do so.

As an emerging young adult, committed to halakhic observance with no family precedent swaying me in any particular direction, I am still navigating Jewish institutions and their respective ideologies. Many are disturbed by the hype Rabbi Avi Weiss' Open Orthodoxy movement has created, fearing that the movement will tear at the fabric of our tradition. This fear has impeded a careful look at his institutions from the inside, resulting instead in ad hominem attacks on the movement's leadership.

For example, Rabbi Dr. Gidon Rothstein's open letter in *Haaretz* stated that Rabbi Asher Lopatin, the current Chovevei president, and Open Orthodox leaders are on the "wrong" side of the line between Orthodox and Conservative Judaism. "We are not pushing you out of Orthodoxy – you have plunged over the line yourselves again and again," the article stated. Another article, by Rabbi Moshe Averick in *The Algemeiner Journal*, likened Rabbi Avi Weiss to the biblical Korach, deeming him "duplicious"

and a "conniving politician." It stated that Weiss' halakhic authority was "non-existent," and termed those affiliated with his "neo-Conservative" movement "shallow individuals." In an editorial in *Ami Magazine*, Rabbi Yitzchok Frankfurter calls Open Orthodoxy a "heretical movement" and states that "one is not permitted to be mechalel Shabbos to save his [Rabbi Lopatin's] life."

So, what was I afraid of by participating in this program? I was scared of being indoctrinated, as I am with any institution that has an explicit ideology.

On my first trip, I walked around until I found the Beit Midrash. I walked inside, took a Talmud off the shelf and tried to decipher my Aramaic traditions. I was unfazed, though acutely aware, that I was the only woman there. My head turned back down towards the Talmud, curious if a male response would ensue. A few minutes later, none other than Rabbi Avi Weiss, founder and founding president of Chovevei, approached me and welcomed me to the Beit Midrash, asking "Do you feel comfortable here?" I knew there was something different about this place at that moment.

The next day when I began my studies at Chovevei, female and male participants and rabbinical students all learned together b'chavruta in one Beit Midrash. I noticed that everybody in the room seemed at ease. When it was time for maariv, I made my way over to the other side of the room, as the mechitza was erected for two other females and myself. Throughout the week I learned that the mechitza is erected no matter how many women show up; it is important to them that women have a space

to pray with the minyan. That night, I met Rabbi Asher Lopatin, who introduced himself to me as Asher. We engaged in polite chat that was casual and non-threatening. I started thinking about how Torah doesn't exist in a vacuum; people and their unique circumstances matter. This is why I found both Chovevei and Maharat's emphasis on interpersonal skills so refreshing. *Pirkei Avot* teaches us to "Make for ourselves a Rabbi and acquire a friend," often interpreted to be the same person. I found this to be the case for the Chovevei and Maharat rabbis and rabbinical students.

Avi Shafran of Agudath Israel of America wrote to *Tablet Magazine* that the role of Maharat is "dissonant with tzniut," "which expresses the essence of a Jewish woman's role and strength." I discovered that, contrary to what I had heard, the Maharats' true intentions are not to abandon tzniut, but rather to teach Torah and help the Jewish people. From my encounters with the Maharat students, I observed how they are utilizing their strengths to model positive associations for women with the halakha and showing them that they too can be involved in leadership roles. As one Maharat told me, "we are not here to seek power or to usurp rabbinical male authority." Likewise, the Chovevei and Maharat educators were humble in how they introduced themselves and interacted with us. The types of grappling-with-faith questions these rabbinical students are asking seemed different. They weren't afraid of answers; there were no boundary to questions out of fear of what the answer would imply.

One of my peers, Brandeis' Nathan Young, observed, "The students are also able to teach

[and encouraged to foster their own opinions], the Rabbis aren't the only ones able to speak."

Another peer, SCW Senior Sarah Robinson, noted, "I was impressed because their curriculum was so varied and comprehensive. After one week of learning, I had participated in interactive lectures about bioethics, bible, sexual ethics, conversion, and theology. Each presenter challenged me and provided food for thought. Nothing was watered down; we all studied from the original sources."

I learned from my experience that Chovevei and Maharat are not trying to rip the fabric of our tradition; rather, they are trying to re-knit our tattered communal quilt, frayed by assimilation, dissatisfaction and exclusion. What Modern Orthodoxy is saying about Open Orthodoxy isn't much different than what Ultra Orthodoxy is saying about Modern Orthodoxy. The conflict does not seem much different than past conflicts in Jewish history in which new schools of thought were disputed. Only time will tell, as *Pirkei Avot* suggests, whether this disagreement will last because of its pure intentions, or disappear because of its ulterior motives.

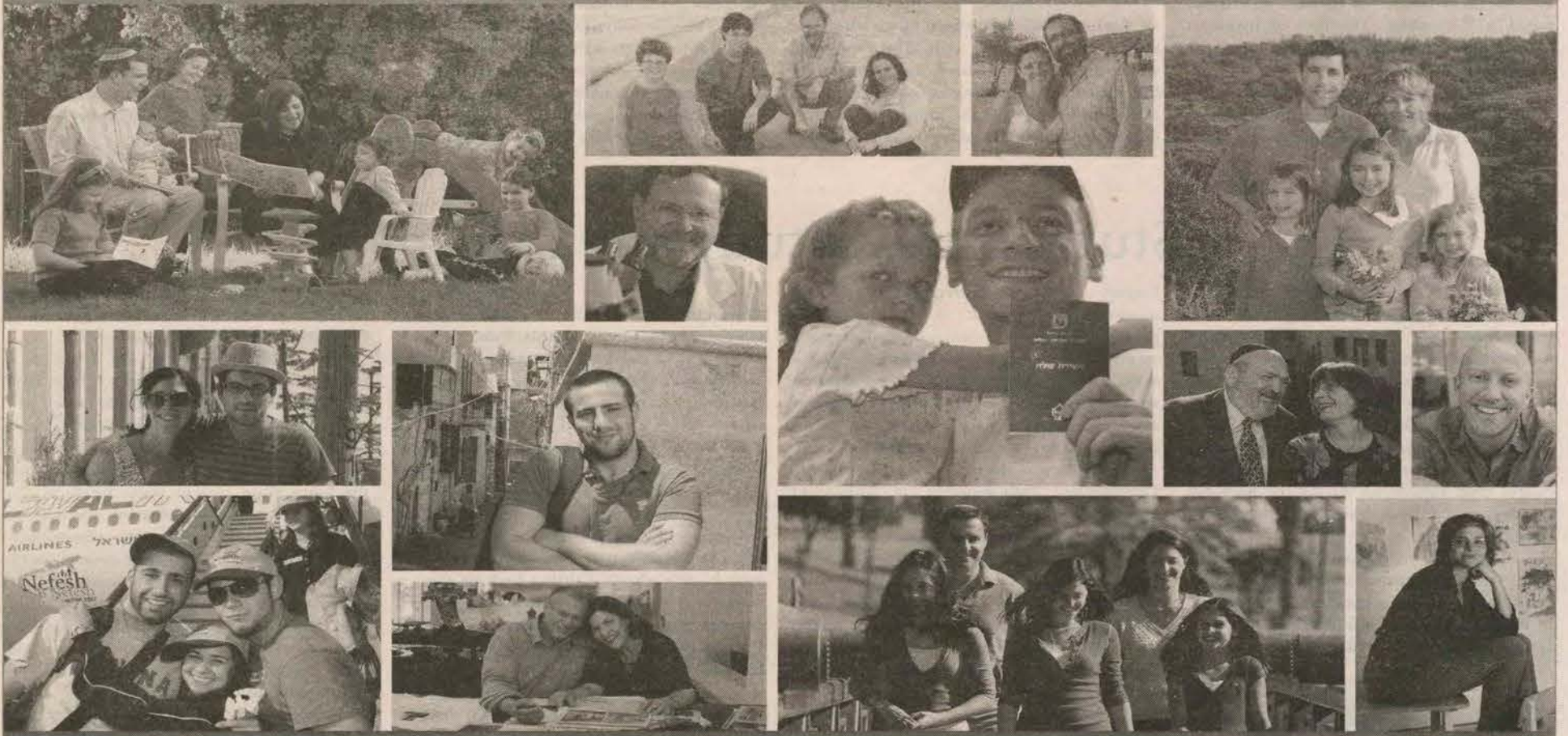
In the meantime, instead of vilifying Rabbi Weiss and Rabbi Lopatin, I urge you to visit and see the environments for yourself. Some think they are overstepping their boundaries, creating unnecessary rifts in our community. But perhaps this is just pushback on a movement that is trying to make scary, but necessary, change. Let's take a lesson from Hillel and Shamai and learn to respectfully disagree with one another, while hearing both sides.



ALIYAH MEGA EVENT

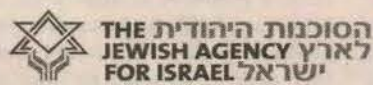
EMPLOYMENT
COMMUNITIES
FINANCES
EDUCATION
RETIREMENT
ALIYAH BENEFITS

ALIYAH FAIR & WORKSHOPS
SUN, MARCH 9TH • 12:00^{PM}
CROWNE PLAZA TIMES SQUARE, NYC
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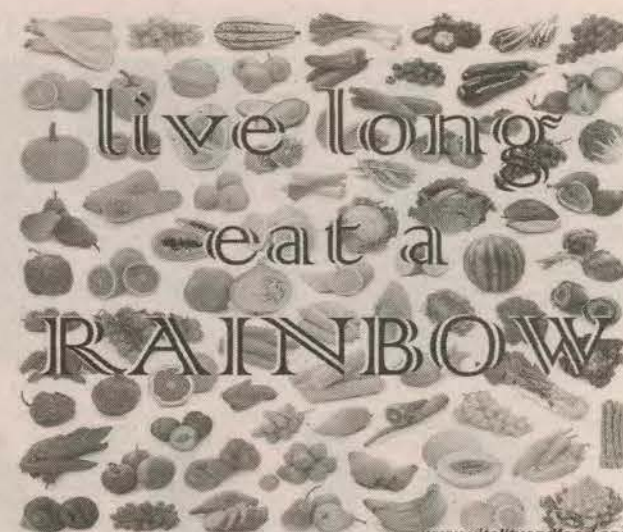
נפש Nefesh
ב'נפש B'Nefesh
Aliyah: Live the Dream

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO BUILD A STRONGER ISRAEL THROUGH ALIYAH



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

JACKIE BENAYOUN



Antioxidants: A Sure-fire Way to Slow the Aging Process

Emily Chase If we look around the streets of New York City, we see hundreds of people running to catch the light, talking on their cell phones, or looking up at the skyscrapers and dreaming about big plans. In an almost synchronized flow, they move, speak, and think freely. We often take for granted our ability to obtain the energy for all of these actions. One might wonder: how does our body produce this energy? Where does it come from?

Inside the microscopic cells in our body is an organelle called the mitochondria. In the mitochondria, high-energy electrons are passed from one atom to another and release energy. Using this energy, the hydrogen ions are pumped into the space between the inner and outer mitochondrial membranes. This high concentration of hydrogen ions in between the two membranes produces an electrochemical gradient which forces the hydrogen ions back into the inner membrane through an enzyme called ATP synthase. The flow of hydrogen ions produces the energy used to catalyze the production of ATP.

The whole process began with high energy electrons being passed around and releasing energy. But where do these electrons go when

they are used up? Often, they end up being added to Oxygen (O₂) to create superoxide (O₂⁻), a free radical that is highly chemically reactive. The reactive oxygen species produced as a side effect from ATP production can have both positive and negative effects. They aid in the killing of bacteria, but they often react with and cause damage to the cells.

Studies indicate that free radicals can cause damage and mutate DNA, which may lead to a shortened life span for the cell. This is because free radicals can affect telomeres, pieces of DNA found on the end of each chromosome, which are needed for cell replication. After each cell division, a portion of the telomere is removed until it reaches a certain size limit at which point the cell can no longer replicate and the cell begins to age. Reactive oxygen species can damage the telomere site, which can cause a person's cells to age faster.

It would appear that the energy has an "unintended" side effect of creating free radicals which damage cells. The very thing which allows us to live is causing us to die. It's like a small leakage telling us that something is not exactly right, that the human system isn't perfect. It reminds us that we are human, and as

human beings there will be mistakes and errors. The consequence of this small side effect shows us the importance of every aspect of our body.

Every Stern girl's fear is confirmed—we are getting older, at every moment. But there is good news: the body finds methods to lessen the damage. For example, the body uses antioxidants to help diminish free radical damage. Antioxidants donate an electron to the free radicals, in effect swallowing the electrons up before they can react with the body's cells. Therefore, eating foods with antioxidants can make a person healthier and is believed to prolong life. Antioxidants are found in many colorful fruits and vegetables. Let's call it the rainbow of antioxidants.

Red: Fruits such as strawberries, watermelon, tomatoes, grapefruit, and apples are full of antioxidants. Tomatoes are rich in lycopene, an antioxidant that prevents skin cancer. Additionally, the food with the most overall antioxidants is the small red bean.

Orange: The color orange is found to be the color of many antioxidant rich foods. Apricots, carrots, cantaloupe, mangoes, and tangerine all have antioxidants. Also squash, pumpkin, and

sweet potato are nice antioxidant foods for the Fall season.

Yellow: Corn, cauliflower, and yellow peppers (and any other color of pepper) are great for a person's diet.

Green: An array of antioxidants are found in broccoli, spinach and other leafy green vegetables. The high content of antioxidants in green leafy vegetables helps prevent various types of cancer— including lowering the risk of stomach, breast and skin cancer.

Blue: The food with one of the highest level of antioxidants is blueberries, which is replete with Vitamin C. Adding them to yogurt or cereal is an easy way to increase antioxidant intake.

Purple: The regal purple is also the color of many foods with antioxidants, such as prunes and eggplant.

In order to get the most antioxidants out of your food, don't boil or overcook them in a microwave. A better way to get antioxidants is to eat them raw, steamed, or stir-fried. Chewing your vegetables well also helps you release the most antioxidants. Eating smart is the start to a healthy lifestyle!

Study, Study, Study and...Sleep?

Emily Chase We all know that once vacation ends, going to sleep before the clock reads A.M. is a significant feat. Whether it comes down to re-memorizing the last ten terms for the test or rushing to submit a paper before the deadline, the to-do list before bedtime is often long and unending. While this may be the reality, it is important to learn the ramifications of insufficient sleep. The list ranges from exhaustion during the next day to a higher chance of developing Alzheimer's later in life.

1. Sleep strengthens memory. That's right. Instead of memorizing those equations an extra three times, it may be more beneficial to sleep an extra 20 minutes. According to Dr. Rapoport, an associate professor at NYU

Langone Medical

Center, the brain strengthens previous memories while one is sleeping. This process is called consolidation. The three stages of memory consolidation called stabilization, enhancement, and integration are all strengthened by sleep through different cascades that take place in the brain on an intracellular to macromolecular level.

2. Sleep decreases inflammation. Uncontrolled inflammation is linked to serious diseases such as stroke, heart disease, arthritis, and diabetes. A study done by the Morehouse-Emory Partnership to Eliminate Cardiovascular Health Disparities demonstrated this. IL-6, fibrinogen and C-Reactive protein (a protein strongly linked to heart disease) levels were found to be higher in people who accounted for sleeping six hours or less at night.

3. Sleep increases athletic ability. If you are on any kind of sports team, then read this carefully. A study was conducted by Stanford University in 2011 which required 11 members of the Stanford basketball team to sleep at least ten hours a night over a five to seven week period. Interestingly, after this increased sleeping period, free-throw shooting accuracy by players who participated in the study increased by nine percent, and three point field goal accuracy increased by 9.5 percent.

4. Sleep allows weight loss to occur. Research published by the University of Chicago in 2010 tested this theory. Levels of ghrelin, a hormone that triggers hunger and reduces the amount of energy used in metabolic activities, was raised in dieters whose sleep was restricted. Also, in the same study, when dieters cut back on their sleep, only one quarter of their weight loss came from fat loss. According to Plamen Penev, assistant professor of medicine at the University of Chicago, "If your goal is to lose fat, skipping sleep is like poking sticks in your bicycle wheels. Cutting back on sleep, a behavior that is ubiquitous in modern society, appears to compromise efforts to lose fat through dieting. In our study it reduced fat loss by 55 percent."

5. Sleep increases brain cell replenishment. New research published in the Journal of Neuroscience by Dr. Chiara Cirelli and colleagues from the University of Wisconsin indicate that myelin, a substance that insulates and speeds up nerve and brain cells, is produced at high levels during sleep. Immature oligodendrocytes, the cells that produce myelin, were found doubly in mice that slept as opposed to mice that did not sleep. In fact, the genes that cause apoptosis, or cell death, were activated in the mice that were forced to stay awake. Research is now being done to discover if there is a strong link

between loss of sleep and the symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis, a disease that targets myelin throughout the central nervous system.

6. Sleep "cleans up" the brain. In a recent issue of Science, a research team from the University of Rochester discusses this phenomenon. Similar to the lymphatic system, which clears infection and pathogens from our bodies, the glymphatic system detoxes the brain from certain waste products that can cause serious neurological diseases like Alzheimer's disease. Research administered by the University of Rochester showed that in mice, the glymphatic system is nearly ten times more active while sleeping than while awake. Additionally, they found that the sleeping brain removed a far larger amount of amyloid-beta, a toxic protein strongly associated with Alzheimer's disease, than an awake brain. Another interesting discovery from the University of Rochester team is that brain cells shrink 60 percent while one is sleeping, creating more room for toxins to be flushed away.

While trying to get a full night's sleep every night may be an impossible demand, everyone should realize that sleeping is more biologically beneficial and imperative than simply not feeling tired the next day. For the upcoming semester, realize that more sleep will increase your ability to succeed!



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Biochemical Warfare

Yael Horvath From the very conception of modern technology, humanity has encountered the choice of bettering the world or heralding destruction upon society—whether in the name of superiority, religion, or further technological advancement. As the marriage of science and technology has been a mostly happy and fruitful one, it has also launched toxic inventions and discoveries unprecedented to date. Terrorism in the 21st century has taken a turn for the exponentially more evil and more effective means of destruction through the coupling of terror and biochemical warfare. This new brand of terrorism, termed bioterrorism, is far more relevant to science fiction novels than it is to what we think of as traditional terror. However, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta has just recently stated that bioterrorism is now considered one of the top 5 health threats of 2014, providing this new threat with a real sense of relevance.

According to the CDC, bioterrorism is defined as terrorism involving the “deliberate release of viruses, bacteria, toxins, or other harmful agents used to cause illness or death in people, animals, or plants.” While these agents are typically found in nature, laboratories can “enhance” them to increase their resistance to vaccinations or to increase their ability to

spread farther, and through novel media—such as through air, water, and food. The lure of using biological weapons as opposed to head-on attacks is bioweapons’ stealth ability to avoid detection and the significant delay in the onset of the illness after the pathogen has been administered. In addition, these weapons can be easily obtained and are relatively inexpensive.

Due to its advantages, it is no surprise that bioterror has actually existed in many primitive forms for centuries, with the first recorded attack in the 6th century when the Assyrians used various poisons derived from fungus to infect their enemy’s wells to cause delirium, or even death.

A more commonly known biochemical agent is anthrax, derived from a bacterium that causes a disease affecting the skin and lungs. Allegedly, German agents in World War I used anthrax spores cultivated in covert laboratories around the world to infect their enemies’ war animals by planting them in sugar cubes. When fed to thousands of cattle, horses, and mules belonging to the enemy country, artillery movement and supply convoys, heavily dependent on horses and mules; were severely incapacitated. Glanders, or *Burkholderia mallei*, another pathogen similar to anthrax, was used to accomplish

the same goal with Russian, American, and Argentinian animals. In addition, the Japanese used glanders to deliberately infect Chinese horses and even prisoners of war and civilians during World War II.

More recently, two male college students belonging to a terrorist organization plotted to poison Chicago’s water supply by introducing typhoid germs into the drinking water reserves in 1972. Though their plans were successfully thwarted, one of the biggest biochemical attacks since the Second World War that went unstoppable was in 1984, when 751 individuals in Oregon were killed through the deliberate contamination of restaurant salad bars with *Salmonella*. The motive behind this massively tragic attack was a political one, in hopes to incapacitate a large segment of the voting population in order to sway the vote in favor of the organization’s leader.

However, it wasn’t until 2001, one week after the attacks of September 11, that bioterror has skyrocketed into the awareness of governments worldwide. When letters containing anthrax spores were mailed to several news media offices and US senators, ultimately killing five and injuring 17, biosafety labs began to work incessantly on developing vaccinations for these kinds of pathogens.

Currently, one of the biggest bioterror

frights is the possible advent of a smallpox attack. Smallpox, considered the ultimate weapon of mass destruction, has killed more people throughout history than any other infectious disease, including the bubonic plague. Throughout the eighteenth century alone, small pox was responsible for killing 200,000 to 600,000 people each year. However, the disease was successfully eradicated in 1980 globally, with the only surviving strains locked safely away in the CDC and in Russia.

Though there has been talk about the possibility of destroying the smallpox stockpiles in the US and Russia, the US government recently bought 463 million dollars’ worth of new smallpox vaccine to treat two million people in an effort to prepare for a possible bioterrorism attack. Even if both countries destroyed all traces of the virus, it is nevertheless possible nowadays to artificially sequence its genome in labs without a pre-existing model. Therefore, as the ability of researchers to manipulate pathogens increases, so does the danger of a possible bioterror attack. It is chilling to think that terror in the 21st century is changing tactics; where mere bombs are not enough, the sophisticated, yet unpredictable vagaries of the science laboratory are the new way to procure the most lethal of weapons.

Placenta Pills: Cannibalism or a Natural Wonder?

Allison Tawil Yes, you read that correctly: placenta pills. Encapsulated placenta, to be more exact.

A trend that is gaining hold among new mothers is to save the placenta released after birth and to transform them into consumable pills. Many claim that if taken once a day, these encapsulated placentas increase energy and breast-milk supply as well as prevent postpartum depression and aging.

Well, that is until one considers where these pills actually come from. The placenta is an organ that connects the fetus to its mother’s uterine wall. Through the placenta, a fetus attains nutrients, exchanges gases, and eliminates waste. It has a similar appearance to a human liver outside the body, and is about 9 inches long and one inch thick. Not the most aesthetically pleasing sight.

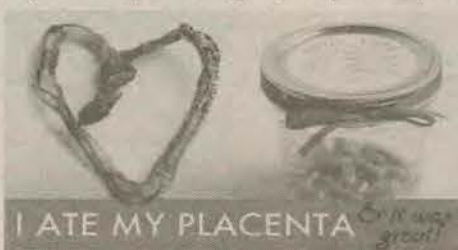
The question then becomes whether there is scientific evidence that consuming placenta pills really contain all of these benefits. Critics maintain that the pills just create a placebo effect; a phenomenon in which a medically ineffectual treatment contains a perceived improvement in medical condition. Placenta pills have never been tested against a placebo, and encapsulated placenta has yet to be studied extensively. Some say that due to the rigorous processing that the placenta undergoes to become encapsulated; few hormones or nutrients are left in the pills. In order to become encapsulated, the placenta is steamed, cut, dried out, and then ground and put into capsules.

Users of the pills claim they work magic. According to the Independent Placenta Encapsulation Network, there are studies that have shown an increase in breast-milk to capsule consumers. The website states, “Consuming the placenta after birth using placenta encapsulation or other placenta remedies nourishes the mother of lost nutrients and hormones and may entirely prevent ‘baby

blues’ and/or post-natal depression.”

The effects of the placenta are something that has been known in traditional Chinese medicine for hundreds of years. Consumption of the placenta is a popular treatment for wasting diseases, infertility, and other conditions.

Historically, humans probably copied the idea of eating their placentas from animals. One possible reason for placentalophagy is for animals to hide from their predators that they have given birth. Another possible reason for this practice is to restore the animal’s body to normal and ease birth stress due to the high levels of prostaglandin and oxytocin contained in the placenta. Prostaglandins are a group of lipid compounds that are derived enzymatically from fatty acids and mediate strong physiological effects, such as regulating the contraction and relaxation of smooth muscle tissue. Oxytocin, commonly referred to as the “happy hormone,” is a mammalian neurohypophysial hormone secreted by the pituitary gland that acts as a neuromodulator in the brain. Oxytocin plays an important role in reproduction, childbirth, maternal bonding, and lactation; recent studies have also uncovered oxytocin’s role in various behaviors, such as social recognition and anxiety. Therefore, the positive effects of encapsulated placenta consumption hold ground if adequate levels of prostaglandins and oxytocin are present in processed placenta pills.



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FDA Sets Limits to Prevent Severe Liver Damage

Jennifer Wiseman According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 325 is the magic number—325 milligrams of acetaminophen per tablet or capsule, that is. Due to continuous reports of severe liver damage, the FDA requests that manufacturers of prescription combination products containing acetaminophen—such as Vicodin and Percocet—not exceed 325 mg of acetaminophen per dosage unit. Since the initial January 2011 request to place a 325 mg limit on dosage unit by January 14, 2014, a little over half of manufacturers have cooperated on their own volition. The FDA’s actions do not affect over-the-counter acetaminophen products such as Tylenol.

The FDA stated that acetaminophen has been implicated in severe liver injury in patients who “took more than the prescribed dose of an acetaminophen-containing product in a twenty-four-hour period; took more than one acetaminophen-containing product at the same time; or drank alcohol while taking acetaminophen products.” In fact, accidental overdose of these combination products accounts for nearly half of acetaminophen-related liver failure, resulting in transplant or death.

Acetaminophen, when used as directed, safely and effectively alleviates pain and fever. Most people associate the drug with Tylenol; however, most consumers are often oblivious of acetaminophen’s presence in other products—both prescription and over-the-counter. The recipe for typical prescription pain medications (for moderate to severe pain) consists of acetaminophen combined with other ingredients, most often opioids such as codeine, oxycodone and hydrocodone, to form Tylenol with Codeine, Percocet and Vicodin, respectively. “There are no available data to show that taking more than 325 mg of acetaminophen per dosage unit provides additional benefit that outweighs the added risks for liver injury,” said the FDA in statement on January 14th of this

year. With a new limit of acetaminophen per capsule, the FDA suggests that physicians can prescribe patients one or two units up to six times a day and still be under the 4000 mg daily limit.

“There is no immediate danger to patients who take these combination pain medications, and they should continue to take them as directed by their health care provider,” said Sandra Kweder, M.D., deputy director of the Office of New Drugs in FDA’s Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. Kweder stated that “The risk of liver injury primarily occurs when patients take multiple products containing acetaminophen at one time and exceed the current maximum dose of 4,000 milligrams within a 24-hour period.” By lowering the maximum dosage per unit, the likelihood for overdose is diminished in the event that someone ingests too many acetaminophen-containing products. The FDA now requires manufacturers to print a “Boxed Warning”—the FDA’s strongest type of warning—to stress the risk for potential severe liver damage.

The FDA requests that physicians advise patients not to take more than the prescribed dose of an acetaminophen-containing medication. They also urge doctors to advise patients 1) not to take more than one product that contains acetaminophen 2) to read all prescription and labels to ensure they are not taking multiple acetaminophen-containing products accidentally (such as Tylenol, NyQuil, Vicks and Coricidin) 3) not to drink alcohol while taking acetaminophen-containing medications.

Hopefully, thanks to a greater effort to raise awareness of acetaminophen overdose, there will be significantly fewer cases of severe liver damage. Although the risk of overconsumption may be lower at YU, it is nonetheless imperative to read the label before taking any prescription or nonprescription drugs. The ingredients might surprise you.

The Gift of Aging

Tamar Levy The gift of growing old is one that few appreciate. Or more poignantly, "Do not regret growing older. It is a privilege denied to many."

On January 10, 2014, at the age of 17, Sam Berns, a Massachusetts high school junior, passed away. At the age of 22 months, Sam Berns was diagnosed with Progeria Syndrome, otherwise known as Hutchinson Gilford Progeria Syndrome (HGPS). This disease was named after the two individuals who independently first described it: Jonathan Hutchinson (in 1886) and Hastings Gilford (in 1897). Those who suffer from this genetic disorder experience premature aging. It is conjectured that this disorder was in fact the inspiration behind the 1922 short story "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button", written by F. Scott Fitzgerald. This short story was subsequently the basis of the 2008 American film directed by David Fincher, also entitled *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*.

Progeria affects 1 in 4-8 million children, and statistically, only 200-250 children in the world are afflicted with this disease at any given time. Children with this disease are generally born with a healthy appearance, while the characteristics associated with Progeria usually present themselves within the child's first year of life. As the disorder begins to take a toll on the child, growth failure, osteoporosis, heart disease, stroke, loss of body fat and hair, aged-looking skin, and stiff joints are expressed. Children suffering with

Progeria resemble one another, despite the fact that they may come from different ethnic backgrounds. The average life span for a child with this disease is around thirteen years, as the individual usually succumbs to heart attacks or stroke. Generally, normal motor and mental development are retained.

HGPS is not normally a disorder that runs in families. The genetic mutation is one of chance and is extremely rare. HGPS is considered a "sporadic autosomal dominant mutation." It is "sporadic" in that it is a change not passed on through the family; it is considered "dominant" because there need only be one copy of the abnormal gene in order to create an affected individual; it is considered "autosomal" since the chromosomes affected are autosomal, or non-sex chromosomes.

In 1999, Sam's parents, both physicians, established the Progeria Research Foundation (PRF), where they worked tirelessly to isolate the causative gene. On April 16, 2003, the discovery of the Progeria gene was announced in Washington D.C. The conference included, among others, Dr. Leslie Gordon (Sam's mother), and Dr. Francis Collins, the head of the Human Genome Project (a project attempting to determine and map out the base-pair sequences which formulate human DNA).

The PRF discovered that a mutation in the LMNA ("lamin-a") gene is the cause of HGPS. The LMNA gene produces the lamin A protein which holds the cell's nucleus

together. The abnormal lamin A protein is termed progerin. Progerin causes the nucleus to become unstable. This instability is responsible for the rapid and premature aging that is seen in people with HGPS.

Scientists believe that by studying this disease and the lamin A proteins, they will be able to better understand the process of regular aging and the heart diseases that subsequently present themselves. Every human produces a small amount of progerin, yet those with Progeria disorder produce much more progerin than those without the disease. The progerin that builds up within the body throughout one's lifetime may cause certain medical issues associated with aging, such as atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries). Progerin is also linked with a dysfunction of telomeres—proteins that participate in cellular aging.

As of late, there are no known cures for the disease, but research is on-going. Developing a cure for Progeria will not only aid these children suffering from HGPS, but may also enable the treatment of millions of elderly adults who are suffering from heart disease and stroke due to the natural phenomenon of aging. In September 2012, in the first clinical trial, a farnesyltransferase inhibitor (FTI) was established as the first treatment for Progeria. Research is still underway, and more possible cures are being explored.

As I did research upon this rare disorder, many articles came up with regards to Sam Berns. The constant recurring theme that

presented itself, however, was that Sam lived his life always approaching every situation with his upbeat, friendly, and happy personality. His inspirational story has even been made into a film entitled *Life According to Sam*.

With all of the developing technology and in-depth research that is being done in regards to progerin, the hope remains that one day a cure will be found to enable these children to live a completely normal life. Yet, simultaneously, it also becomes increasingly important to question the ethics surrounding researching the natural aging phenomenon. At what point will the line be drawn as scientists delve into the studies surrounding how human beings age? Preventing normal individuals from aging is a scientific endeavor that can easily be seen as becoming an attempted reality, yet the effort to take this type of natural phenomenon into human hands is one that would pose major ethical dilemmas. And so, as research is conducted, let us hope that science does not lose sight of its goal: to find a cure to enable these children to live normal long healthy lives. In the meantime, we can learn an immeasurable amount just by looking at the short but impactful and inspirational life of Sam Berns. As Sam himself said on TEDx MidAtlantic 2013, "I don't waste energy feeling bad for myself. I surround myself with people I want to be with and I keep moving forward. With this philosophy I hope all of you can have a happy life as well."

Interview with Dr. Evan Mintzer, Professor of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry



<http://yu.edu/faculty/pages/Mintzer-Evan>

Jackie Benayoun and Naamah Plotzker
Observer: Hi Dr. Mintzer! Can you please tell us a little about your personal history?

EM: I didn't get here by most people's routes. When I first went to college, I went to Stony Brook [University]. It was a lot of fun...I dropped out after two years, with about eight credits, I think. I was majoring in Poli-Sci. It was fun; I was an RA, it was like a resort. But eventually they tell you that if you're not taking classes, you really can't stay. So I went home, and worked for my family business, where we made leather briefcases. I was a craftsman. I grew up in Rosedale, Queens, and our business was in Queens. I met my wife, we got married, we moved our family there, and I worked for twelve years. [A]nyway, I started to hate it... because working for family isn't that much

fun. And I went back to school...eight years later... and then I just kept going until I got a PhD.

You went back to Stonybrook?

EM: No, I went back to Queensborough [Community College], and I had to take remedial math...and it was at night, so there were no credits for it, and I was paying for it! We were actually going to ask if you really loved chemistry in high school...

EM: No, I liked science when I was a little kid, but that was it.

At that point, you must have known that you wanted to do science, and that you were going to need remedial math classes...?

EM: We went through...a difficult pregnancy, our second pregnancy, and in the course of that... [my wife] had a really good Ob-Gyn, like an old-school physician, and... this doctor was really inspirational. I thought, "This is a guy who can make you feel better when the outcome is - you can't change the outcome, physicians often can't change an outcome - yet, just his presence meant something. That's a physician." So I entertained the idea [of studying medicine].

Because of this particular doctor?

EM: [Yes.] So I took a math, a second math, chemistry...bio. Eventually I transferred to Queens [College]. I found that school is easy—it's just not that hard - if you do the work...we didn't grow up in a disciplined environment,

in the Orthodox environment. We are all about the same intelligence. Everybody is. The Einsteins - there are a couple of them... but we're all about the same. It's all about how you do the work. And I liked chemistry... eventually, it began to dawn on me that [a career in medicine was] not feasible... I really wasn't qualified to do much after making leather goods. I hated school - I hated it. That's why I didn't go. I did well in elementary school. They had a program, actually, in the City - IGC...Intellectually Gifted Children. Do you know how screwed up this is? [I was] a year younger when I went to high school... you're just not ready for it as a little kid! I don't know what they thought I should skip a grade for. Then the natural progression - after high school you gotta go to college.

You were in Queens College, you had started taking chemistries; you were doing well, and then what?

EM: I got my PhD through the City University of New York. I went there and did my research at Queens [College], I did my research with a prominent professor at Queens, who Dr. Blau also worked for...it was so weird when I interviewed here, and I asked him to write me a letter because he's so ethical, that he didn't even tell me, "oh, I know the head of the department"...[Dr. Blau] told me. So the point is, someone who hates school ends up in a place like this [laughs]. I have these Organic exams to grade, and there's just a total freak-out after the exam.

So you're saying that your grade in Organic doesn't really matter?

EM: I'm saying that. It matters to your GPA somewhat; it doesn't matter to who you're gonna be and what you're gonna do for a living. It shouldn't matter. I think you can't have the attitude I had in Stonybrook and think you're

going to get into medical school. I say this for the students around here, who come in with 98 averages from high school... One four-credit class is not going to change your GPA, unless it's 4.0! I'd rather have a physician who didn't get a 4.0, because that's kind of weird!

Is there any advice you have to students to combine studying with other activities?

EM: You all know how to achieve academically a lot better than I do. You have the discipline, the study habits. You come here with them. So there's nothing I can teach you about that. This is what I tell students who come here after the exam with their crying and their neurosis, "If you can look yourself in the mirror and say, 'I studied as hard as I could, and this is my grade,' then you move on with your life." I understand that there are a different set of pressures on you all, but you have to step back... if you didn't become a physician, it's because you didn't become a physician. It's not because of one test or one course even. You wanna become a physician so badly, go to Mexico, go to the Islands! "But I wanna go to Einstein to become a physician." Ah, so now you're narrowing it down a little bit. "I want to go this year to Einstein." That might not happen.

You do a lot of interesting research, how do you decide what you would like to study?

EM: It's half serendipity and half design. Usually it's through networking. Through networking I met somebody, and he asked, "what are you doing lately?" "I'm studying this drug and it interacts with lipids"...and that was that. It's all on a very informal and friendly basis.

What do you think of the furloughs that are imminent at this institution?

EM: That's a rumor. I've never heard of it. Take it as if you were writing your science paper -

Continue on page 20

Interview with Dr. Evan Mintzer

Oh Holy Night: A Response

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if you can cite it, then you can trust it. Unless I hear...“guess what, Evan – take the next five days off,” then I’ll know it’s true.

What kind of encouragement do you have for students, in terms of our concerns...being offered the best quality education?

EM: If you want to put it from a business model, which it’s not, is we make the widgets– your education [is] the widgets...so furloughing is kind of stupid, because that you’ll feel. If they have problems up there...you should not feel that... ..that’s self-defeating.

In terms of working at this institution, how did that happen?

EM: I worked at Queens [College] because I was a student there. I worked as an EMT because I had to make a living...and I sort of started to drift away from my work. I was ABD (all but dissertation)... and I said, “what am I doing? I put in a lot of effort to get here...” I quit the job and went to my PI and said, “let’s just defend the thing...”...so I started looking for jobs and the first one that opened up was in Georgia, so my wife and I decided to sell the house... and I hated it from the day I got there. We had this beautiful house on an acre of land – I’m from Queens, I didn’t know what an acre looked like... Very soon after being there, I started thinking about getting out. I applied to a bunch of jobs, I interviewed in West Virginia– if you

could take a step down from rural Georgia, it’s West Virginia! Anyway, I didn’t get that, but this one came up, I interviewed for this one... it was coming home... and karma happens and I came up here.

Was it intimidating for you to be part of an [almost] all female chemistry staff?

EM: No. We have the best synced – personality-wise – department in this place, no question. There’s absolutely zero tension. This department is really special.

What is your favorite thing about your job? The students?

EM: Oh, totally. It’s teaching, it’s seeing the... “I get it moment.” I see thirty faces, you see one, and not everyone gets it at the same point, but there’s some point every semester that somebody gets it, and it’s very satisfying. I am a better teacher than I am a researcher. For me, it’s more teaching how to do research, how to be ethical and to ask questions. Those are life skills.

How many years have you been here? Do former students visit?

EM: This is my sixth. I get a lot of emails from – I probably told you this to sell the course – medical students in their first year who just finished their Biochemistry [course]...“oh, you really set us up, Biochemistry we walk through,” and everyone else was working very, very hard.

Continued from page 1
Dolan conducting his Christmas Eve ceremony and giving his sermon. But that’s not the point.

We, the Orthodox Jews, are swiftly becoming what’s left of our continued religious heritage. If we don’t stick to who we are and find greatness in our own Judaism and institutions, then who will? This is not to say Rachel and the other Jews she encountered during midnight mass don’t feel a connection to their Jewish faith and spiritual heritage. Her midnight church experience may have even given her a deeper appreciation of her own faith. I don’t discount that possibility. However, attending that service, and writing about it in such glowing terms, does a disservice to thousands of years of Jewish persecution at the hands of the Church.

Let’s not forget the persecution our ancestors were subjected to specifically on Christmas Eve, at the hand of Christians through the centuries.

Leaving history aside, right now countless Jews are abandoning their faith in record numbers to other religions, sects and cults to find that transcendent spiritual experience elsewhere. Do we really want to help them by acting as a portal to that end?

You may be thinking, “What’s the big deal? So she watched a midnight mass on Christmas Eve and wrote about the experience.” True, in the grand scheme of things, with all the terrible things that are being done to the Jews and in many cases by the Jews, it’s pretty insignificant. However, it’s exactly because of what is happening to our people—with intermarriage at 58%, and 71% among the non-orthodox—that we can’t afford to bask in the glory of another faith, instead of using every opportunity to realize, and more importantly publicize, the incredible faith we have to offer the world around us.

Still haven’t written for the Observer? Don’t worry, a new semester means another chance to write for the Observer. Contact an editor and WRITE ON!

NEXT MONTH IN STERN...

March 2014						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Parshat Pikudei Athletics Shabbaton
2 BB vs The City College of New York MTEN vs The City Col- lege of New York	3 SCW Midterms	4 SCW Midterms MVB vs NYU-Poly	5 SCW Midterms	6 SCW Midterms	7	8 Parshat Vayikra Honor’s Society & Juniors Class Shabbaton
9 BB vs St. Joseph’s College - Brooklyn MTEN vs York College (NY)	10 SCW Midterms	11 SCW Midterms	12 SCW Midterms MTEN vs Sarah Law- rence BB vs Maritime College MVB vs Medgar Evers	13 Ta’anit Esther	14 Career Fair	15 Parshat Tzav Schwabbaton Purim Chagiga!
16 Purim	17 SCW Midterms	18	19 MTEN vs Lehman College	20	21*	22 Parshat Shemini Rabbi Saks Shabbaton
23 WTEN vs The City College of New York MVB vs The Sage Colleges MVB vs Pratt Institute	24	25 BB vs NYU-Poly	26 BB vs NYU-Poly	27 MTEN vs Farming- dale State College	28 BB vs College of Mount Saint Vincent BB vs College of Mount Saint Vincent	29 Parshat Tazria Beren Unite ft. SHS & International Stu- dents Shabbaton
30 MTEN vs The Sage Colleges	31					

RAQUEL MILLER