



The Yeshiva University OBSERVER

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How Do We Compare? The Jewish Intellectual Experience Beyond YU

Makena Owens A Los Angeles native, Noah Greenfield is a graduate of Gush, the Yeshiva College Honors Program, Revel and RIETS. He is a PhD candidate in Jewish Studies at UC Berkeley and a JD candidate at Yale Law School. He is co-founder and CEO of InGenius Prep and is married to Dr. Nava Greenfield and proud father of Judah.

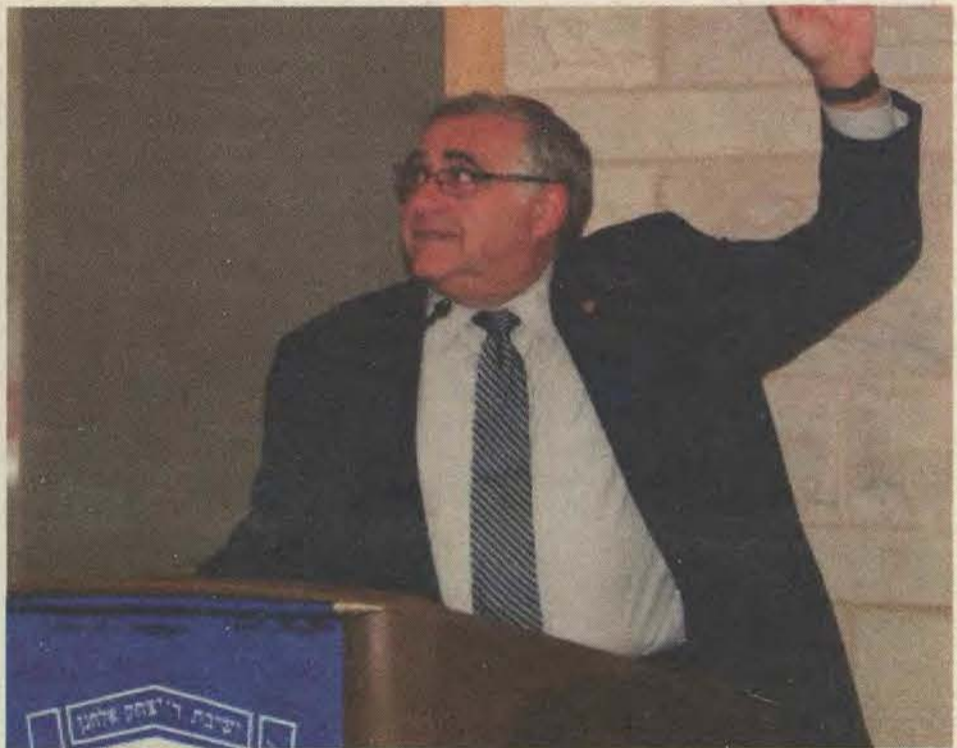
Observer: What motivated you to start your company, InGenius Prep, and what services does it provide?

Noah Greenfield: After getting into a bunch of doctoral programs, my friends applying to PhD programs starting calling and wanted me to look over their applications. This took between 15 to 30 hours of my time, but I did it gladly, and they were all very successful in getting into graduate schools. Once I got into law school, the same thing happened, and my friends wanted advice on getting into law school.

The summer before law school someone I didn't know called asking me for help with an application. Since I didn't know this person, and had just moved, and was really quite busy, I said I didn't have time to help. Then he offered to pay. I had never charged the friends I had helped so I didn't know what to charge this person, and he offered to pay the market rate. I had no idea what the market rate was but after researching it I discovered it was pretty high. So I went for it.

It wasn't until law school orientation that the idea of my company took form. I was talking to the guy next to me and we noticed a market failure: there was a demand for high quality advice about getting into high quality institutions, but the market rate was much too high. Another insight we had was that the people providing these services were often sleazy. So we saw an opportunity to offer lower prices to help more people
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Students Raise Pressing Issues at Year's Final Town Hall Meeting



Adena Kleiner This past Wednesday, April 2, students and faculty crowded into Yagoda Commons for the second and final Town Hall Meeting of the year. After receiving a number of emails from the President over the course of the semester, students were anxious to hear what announcements President Joel would make in person.

President Joel began his remarks by acknowledging the quadrennial Chag HaSemikhah celebration which took place on the Wilf campus. He also announced that the Presidential Medallion will be awarded to previous provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, Dr. Morton Lowengrub at this year's commencement.

President Joel proceeded into the issue at the forefront of everyone's minds: Yeshiva University's current financial status. President Joel explained that the current dismal fiscal situation was a result of overspending in order to provide the best education possible. He added that although YU has over two billion dollars in assets, it is currently facing liquidity challenges. YU will continue to provide an excellent education for its students, but will need to become more sustainable in order to do so.

A decision that resulted from this mode of thinking is the selling of residence buildings in Washington Heights, for which YU received a substantial profit. President Joel confirmed that class sizes will increase and sections will need to combine. He assured students that both financial and merit-based scholarships will continue and that shuttle

services will continue to run. President Joel announced that renovations to the outdoor mall on 185th St. will be completed by the end of next summer, and that the Gottesman library will undergo renovation as per a private donor's request. After listing some of the achievements YU has accomplished this year, President Joel concluded that, "If you want to blame anyone, blame me."

Following his announcements, President Joel introduced incoming Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost Dr. Selma Botman. Dr. Botman expressed her excitement about joining the YU community and encouraged students to introduce themselves, both inside and outside the classroom. Next year she will be teaching a class on the Beren campus in the history of modern Egypt and the Arab Spring.

The first question from the students came from Adena Kleiner (SCW '14). She asked President Joel to comment on the four Yeshiva University faculty members—Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Dr. David Pelcovitz, Rabbi Ezra Y. Schwartz, and Aliza Abrams—who wrote personal pleas of leniency on behalf of Evan Zauder (YC '09) to Judge Lewis A. Kaplan of the United States District Court in New York. Zauder, a recent YU graduate, has been sentenced to 13 years in prison after pleading guilty in January to one count each of enticement of a minor to engage in illegal sexual activity, transportation, receipt, and distribution of child pornography, and possession of child pornography.
Continued on page 3

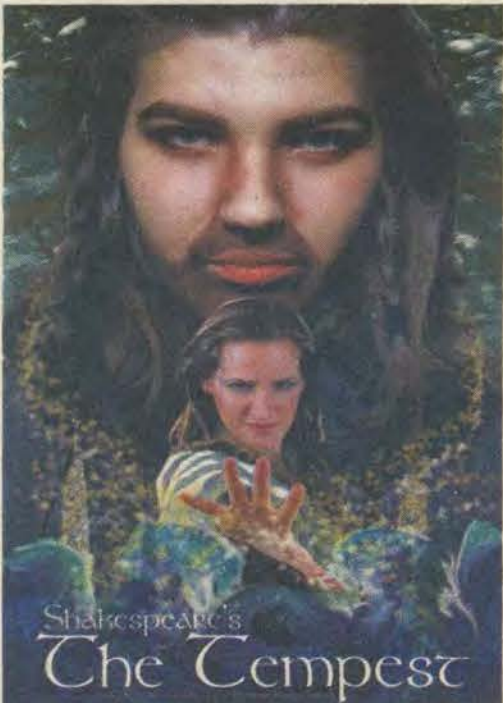
Stern Dramatics Society Triumphs in *The Tempest*

Shoshana Bachrach For the Stern College Dramatics Society, art imitated life with their exceptional performance of *The Tempest*, and not only because it ended, like a CJF trip to a distant land, with an engagement. Just as the protagonist Prospero was ejected from duke

ship in Milan and exiled to a distant isle, SCDS has been recovering from the loss of the Schottenstein Center at the end of the 2012 school year. The past few semesters have shown a group with resilience and creativity, with professional performances despite less than ideal conditions.

Last night's stellar performance proved, as the Bard himself said, all's well that ends well, and that SCDS is firmly back on its feet.

It seemed, in previous semesters, that SCDS was struggling to utilize Norman Thomas's expansive stage. Last night was a creative triumph in that regard. The set sounds deceptively simple: a rocky beach backdrop, a twisting tree trunk, some shrubbery here and there. In truth, there was some extremely clever staging being employed, to say nothing of artistic talent. Unlike other performances, in which the large stage seemed somewhat bare, the gigantic, 17 foot tall tree positively filled it up. Upon closer inspection, the tree was made from twisting vines of thick paper, but from the audience it appeared solid, expansive, and mysterious.
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When the Messenger Goes Too Far

Hannah Dreyfus-Reinstein

From sex-scandals to budget cuts to credit downgrades, Yeshiva University has had one hell of a year. Student programs have been cut and downsized, and class sizes have gradually increased as course selections have decreased. At the recent Town Hall Meeting on the Beren campus, President Joel told the students to "blame him if they want to blame anybody" for the university's strained state.

But, as students, we're not looking to blame. We just want things to get better.

The question of how to make things better has been a matter of central concern among the student publications on campus. *The YU Commentator* has chosen to report on every piece of negative news, feeding the cycle of condemning headlines. Most recently, *The Commentator* broke the story about Evan Zauder, a YU graduate who pled guilty to one count of enticement of a minor and several counts of owning and trafficking child pornography. The story was picked and peddled by other hungry news sources, and our university name was once again associated with 'abuse' and 'scandal', even though the incident had nothing directly to do with YU. Aside from just Zauder, nearly all of the front-page articles in recent issues have chastised the university in one way or another.

On both the men and women's campuses, students are concerned about *The Commentator's* seemingly monolithic approach. Most are merely disgruntled about the never-ending negative press. However, a more radical faction of students at Yeshiva College has taken their dissatisfaction to the next level. This small group of students, preferring to remain anonymous, proposed amendments to the student constitution that would have effectively shut down *The Commentator*. These amendments included requiring the editor in chief to be elected by

the student body and allowing an external board to censor articles before publishing. Thankfully, the General Assembly of student leaders voted down these dangerous amendments. However, the very proposal of these changes indicates a deep and unhealthy rift developing amongst the undergraduate community.

Editor in chief of *The Commentator* Gavriel Brown dedicated this month's editorial to defending himself against the student body. Writes Brown, "We tried our hardest to interpret complex data and convey the administration's hopes against the grim realities of the situation at hand. Our editors strove for neutrality while, at the same time, illuminating stories that would otherwise have remained buried or suppressed." Through his artful prose, one simple and pleading message surfaces: don't shoot the messenger.

I struggle with admiration for *The Commentator's* journalistic tenacity on the one hand and frustration towards their unrelenting accusations on the other. As YU struggles through these hard times, I have selected an editorial policy of reporting on progress instead of scandal. But I do greatly respect *The Commentator* for reporting thoroughly on the underside of an ugly turn in YU history, and commend their consistency, bravery and persistence.

Still, I do not think the student sentiment on campus is unwarranted. A newspaper that is supposed to represent the student body should remain sensitive to student concerns. If the stream of negative press against YU has grown exhausting, the news source from within should at least attempt to generate a different tone. *The Commentator* claims that their critical articles have been written only in the interest of helping the university. But is it really helping the university to continue

spreading negative headlines that reach far beyond the student body to an audience much less discerning, much less sensitive, and much less caring?

Brown is unequivocally correct on one front: criticism is essential to moving forward. Maintaining forums for open dialogue and self-criticism must remain a priority. Make no mistake: those who attempt to censor *The Commentator* out of existence are helping no one, and putting our university at grave risk. Those students who proposed the crippling amendments to the student constitution are tragically short-sighted. Though *The Commentator* and *The Observer* have been known to disagree on certain issues, when it comes to preserving freedom of press and freedom of expression at this university, we are absolutely and solidly united.

However, disseminating accusatory headlines is not the most productive way to improve our university. There are other, more beneficial, ways to express concerns. Student organizations, such as the Student Life Committee (SLC), are dedicated to promoting productive dialogue between the students and the administration. The SLC has been exceptionally attentive this year, organizing meetings between student leaders and staff on a regular basis. There is also no dearth of student councils (SCWSC, TAC, SOY, YSU, YCSA), each with the primary mission of catering to student needs and concerns. There are ways to move forward without flirting with sensationalist journalism.

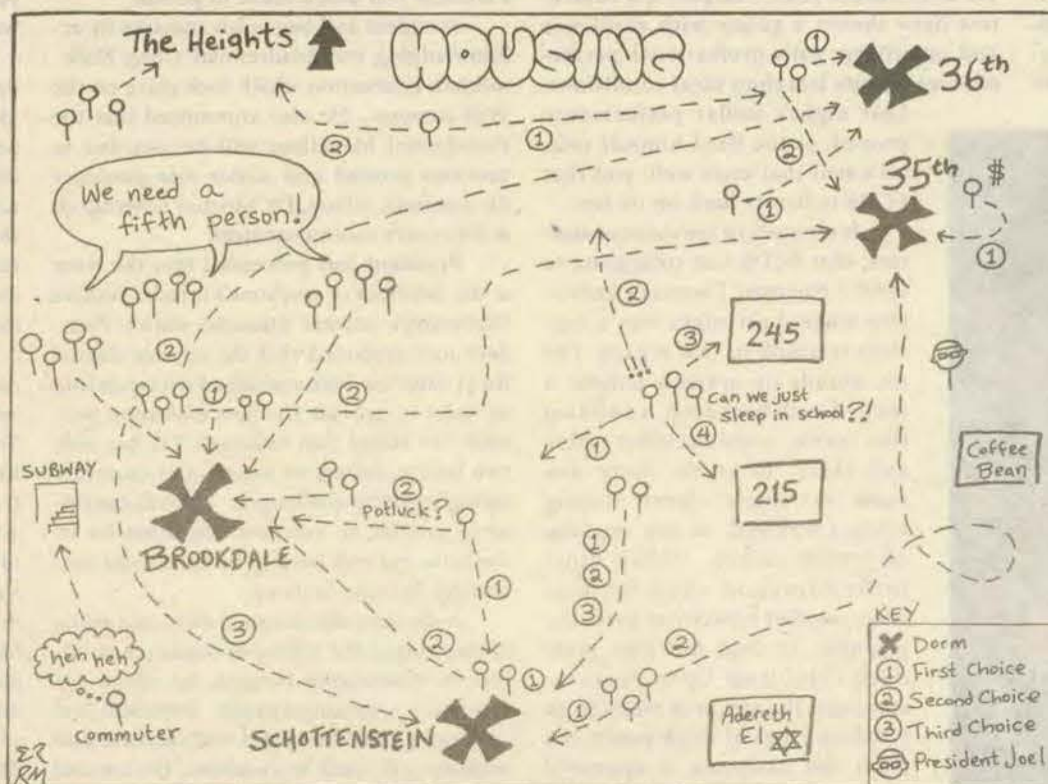
The axiom "there is no such thing as bad press" may hold true for publications attempting to increase page views and fan web traffic. But, for student newspapers, there is such a thing as bad press. And, if there is enough of it, students will start to resent the very outlet that is supposed to represent their collective voice.

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Lizzie Rozentsvayge and Rachel Miriam Rosenfeld

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Chag HaSemikha: RIETS Reaches New Milestone, Looks to the Future

NEWS

ADENA KLEINER
SHALVA GINSPIRG

Kory Darling On Sunday, March 23rd, over 230 men became ordained rabbis, making this the largest class of musmakhim to graduate from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) in Yeshiva University's history. The Chag HaSemikha ceremony took place in the Nathan Lampert Auditorium at Zysman Hall. Over 3,000 people attended the ceremony and over 5,000 viewed it on online. Throughout the day, a parade of the hundreds of celebrating musmakhim and their roshei yeshiva, teachers, family and friends overwhelmed the streets of Washington Heights. The celebrations culminated with a gala fundraiser, at which philanthropist Jay Schottenstein and Rabbi Gedalia Dov, a graduate of RIETS, were honored for awards they received at the ceremony: the Etz Chaim Award and the Harav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt"l Aluf Torah Award, respectively. The fundraising dinner also brought in a remarkable \$1.1 million dollars for RIETS. When asked how the success of the fundraiser will affect the future of RIETS, Rabbi Menachem Penner, Dean of RIETS, stated that "the gifts are crucial at this time [and] will primarily be directed towards continuing the level of our programming."

In his speech during the ceremony, President of Yeshiva University Richard Joel said that he was overwhelmed with hope that these musmakhim would bring about "a state of true shleimut" (completion) for the Jewish people. One of the graduates, Shay Schachter, also viewed the event as an important moment for the Jewish community at large: "It was an awesome feeling to look around the room at fellow and very dear musmakhim, some who have already accomplished incredible amounts, and [who] have great capacity to lead, teach and inspire - and then to close my eyes and think about how much better tomorrow's American Jewish community will be, as a result of our group."

For Dean Penner, the graduation comes at "a very crucial time in Jewish history"

when "there is a greater and greater need for young rabbis who are open, non-judgmental, and welcoming, yet fully committed to the traditional process of halakha."

"We need rabbis who can be sensitive to different kinds of people, yet firm with their halakhic stances," he added.

Though the Chag HaSemikha honored the men of RIETS, the ceremony had a special meaning for the many women who attended as well. Professor of Judaic Studies at Stern Smadar Rosensweig, whose son Moshe Ariel Rosensweig and son-in-law David Weiss both became ordained at the ceremony, expressed that the event was significant "for my daughter Moriah, my daughter-in-law Jackie, and

myself, because we are dedicated Jewish scholars and educators."

"It was thrilling to participate in this event which celebrates the ongoing continuity of our mesorah in our family and in our community," she remarked.

The semikha program at RIETS not only gives students a vast Torah knowledge, but also training in psychology, teaching, and understanding of the real world ethical issues that they may face in their future Rabbinic posts.

In his comment to the Observer, Noah Cheses, one of the graduates who currently works as the JLIC educator at Yale University,

emphasized the uniqueness of RIETS: "My education at RIETS has equipped me with many of the tools that I use daily in my work on a college campus. From the pastoral psychology classes with Dr. David Pelcovitz, to the Practical Halacha course with Rabbi Ezra Schwartz, I often find myself looking back at my notes to remind myself of the knowledge and wisdom that was availed to me."



blogs.yu.edu

Students Raise Pressing Issues at Year's Final Town Hall Meeting

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President Joel declined to make an official statement. However, he did express that YU is an institution that holds the need to be sensitive to such issues and speaking about such issues to the highest degree. He also added that these these letters were not written in the name of YU.

Following up on President Joel's statement regarding the selling of property uptown, many students had questions for the President regarding downtown property. President Joel assured the audience that selling property on the Wilf campus would have no effect on Beren campus buildings. Despite suggestions to relocate Stern College, President Joel staunchly maintained that the best Stern College experience is in midtown Manhattan. He also addressed a question raised by Elana Kook (SCW '15) regarding the increased price for residency in the 35th St dorm and the social pressures that exist regarding housing in this building. President Joel answered that while obviously he does

not want anyone to be made uncomfortable, this is ultimately a market driven question. When this dorm was opened, a conscious decision to use differential pricing was made. The 35th St dorm is a luxury option and needs to be priced accordingly.

Talia Kugelman (SSB '15) asked about the lack of meal plan options. Having previously done research into this issue and learning that the lack of options was due to a need to sustain a steady cash flow in the cafeteria, she asked President Joel if the numbers regarding this assessment could be reviewed. President Joel responded that he will not approve a meal plan that would drain the university's educational system. He said that the Food Services department constantly reviews their numbers and tries to provide the best food options for Stern women.

In a final attempt before her upcoming graduation, Nomi Gofine (SCW '14) asked President Joel (for the fourth year in a row) regarding the possibility of women having

access to the gym and pool uptown. She inquired about this question from both a financial and an experiential perspective. President Joel answered the question that both from a financial and experiential angle it does not make sense to give women access to these facilities. He noted that these facilities are already overpopulated and it would not be feasible to give Stern women access. Also, despite the fact that he is thrilled by the amount of women who come uptown on a nightly basis, President Joel said that he does not think the seriousness of the Yeshiva could be maintained if the schools were co-ed.

President Joel was also faced with students regarding the faculty and the academic experience on the Beren campus. One student asked about the ways in which the university plans to ensure that faculty members do not leave the university because of lack of funding for their research, such as in the case of Organic Chemistry professor Evan Mintzer. President Joel de-

spondently responded that they are not doing nearly enough to combat this issue and that there are no major changes in place. Daniella Lazar (SCW '15) asked about the lack of young professors teaching in Stern. President Joel explained that while of course there is a need to have young and innovative professors, age is not synonymous with quality and that this question is complex because of tenured faculty.

The final question of the afternoon was raised by Rivka Hia (SCW '16) regarding the lack of Talmud classes for Stern women and the scheduling conflicts that often occur because of a lack of class options. President Joel answered that like all other courses, the number of Talmud classes will be correlated with the size of the demand. He concluded that because of the number of classes that will need to be cut, the number of scheduling conflicts would only increase. On a comedic final note, President Joel encouraged Rivka to recruit future students so that there can be a greater demand for more Talmud classes.

Chloe's on Campus: Low-Calorie Soft Serve a Sweet Success

Naamah Schwartz Chloe's Soft Serve Fruit, a low-calorie, fruit-based alternative to ice cream and frozen yogurt, debuted in the Le Bistro and Kushner cafeterias this past September. The installation of the two Chloe machines on the Beren Campus was the result of a collaboration between Food Services and Chloe's Soft Serve Fruit Co, a company based in Union Square and co-founded in 2010 by former Yeshiva University student Chloe Epstein. After almost two semesters on campus, Chloe's Soft Serve Fruit remains a popular caf item, especially for the health-conscious or those looking for a non-dairy dessert after a meat meal.

Chloe's Soft Serve, which is kosher pareve as well as gluten and fat free, is made

from only three ingredients:

fruit, water, and a touch of organic cane sugar. A 3.5 oz. serving of the product contains less than 90 calories. While the soft serve comes in standard banana, apple, and strawberry, there are several exotic varieties as well, including blood orange, Cavaillon Mellon (French cantaloupe), and pumpkin. When coming up with new varieties, the



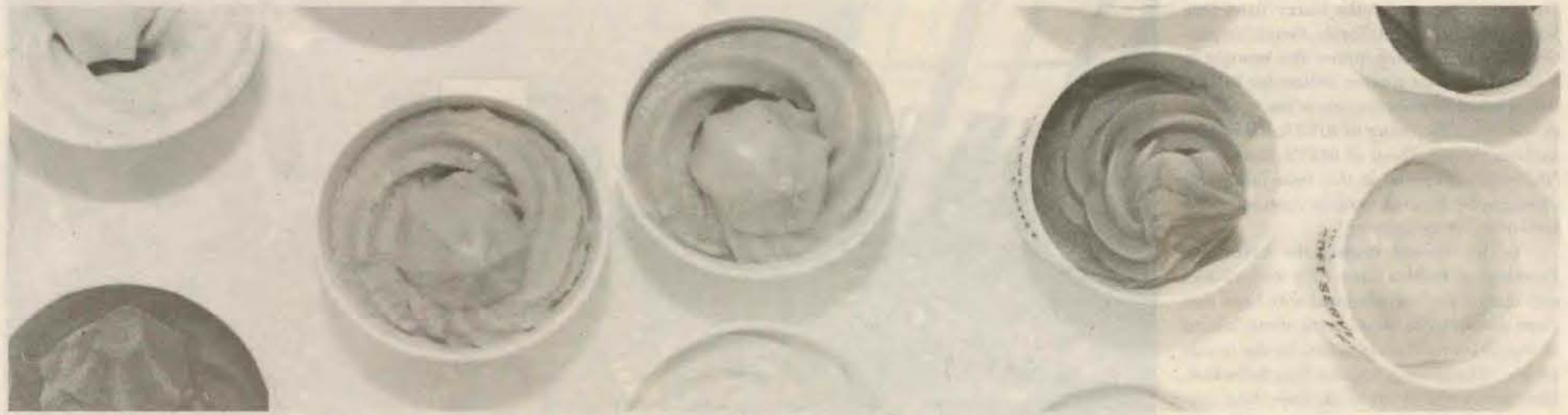
company considers seasonality, customer feedback, and nutritional content.

What with Chloe's flagship store being so close to the Beren campus, and its product being kosher, it seemed only natural to forge a relationship with YU. Thanks to the combined efforts of the Chloe's team and Bruce Jacobs, Director of Dining Services at YU, every week the two machines feature dif-

ferent varieties of soft serve, and Chloe's Soft Serve Fruit Pops are available in the cafeterias as well.

Chloe Epstein, the namesake and co-founder of the company, attended Yeshiva University's Cardozo Law School herself and therefore insisted that Chloe's be kosher. Because the product only contains three ingredients, making the product kosher pareve seemed natural and logical, and it also opened up the market to the kosher demographic, including those who keep Cholov Yisrael.

As the company is currently experimenting with different kinds of fruits, students who are fans of Chloe's should keep an eye out for new varieties of soft serve in the caf.



healthfuldirection.com

35th Street Dorms Raise Price Drastically

Rina Haller With four residential dorm buildings on the Beren campus, there is ample living space for all Stern students. Yet, upon receiving the email from University Housing with this year's housing application, students were startled to discover that the price of the 35th street dorm has nearly doubled. Already considered a bit more extravagant because it adds an extra \$1300 to the cost of general housing, now the 35th street dorm will cost \$2150 more than Brookdale, 36th, or Schottenstein.

Rachel Kraut, Director of University Housing and Residence Life, is not concerned that the dorm will be hard to fill, and revealed that there is already a waiting list. Dr. Chaim Nissel, University Dean of Students, confirmed that "yes, we are still seeing tremendous interest in 35th street dorm."

However, the change in price has caused many students to re-think their dorming plans and has introduced a new layer of tension and financial pressure to the housing process for friends who were planning on moving to 35th street together.

Navah Maynard ('16) commented, "The price change was kind of disappointing and it took me by surprise since my roommates and I had already made 35th

plans before finding out that the difference in price would be doubled. The situation leaves those who need their own kitchen in a sticky situation and seems unfair to those who cannot afford it."

At the recent town hall meeting, President Joel took the blame for the increase. The dorm, he said, is a "relative luxury," and as such, it makes sense that it costs more. Because he felt that the \$1350 was not commensurate with the value of the apartments, he suggested that the price be raised.

Ms. Kraut acknowledged that it is always a difficult decision for students and their families to prioritize financially and to determine how much extra they are willing to spend on housing.

Students decide where to live based on their needs, Resident Advisor Hadassa Holzapfel ('15) said. Some need a kitchen, a single room, or enjoy being at the center of the action.

Wherever you plug in your phone at night, each dorm has a fitness center, laundry room, and at least two lounges. Yet, 35th street, with its kitchen, communal living space, and modern finishes, has unique perks. "You are getting something different in 35th," Holzapfel said.

Apathy Towards Environmental Awareness Raises Concern on Campus

Riva Tropp President Joel began the spring town hall meeting emphasizing Yeshiva University's need to achieve financial sustainability, but environmental sustainability at Yeshiva University was the focus of Earth Week (March 31-April 4), a week-long initiative by the Office of Energy and Sustainability to raise awareness about environmental issues on campus. Students' enthusiasm for the Earth Week programming on both the Beren and Wilf campuses, however, was inconsistent and underwhelming.

Each year, the Office of Energy and Sustainability hires Ecological Representatives, a group of students who act as events facilitators and try to publicize and educate other students on environmental issues. Representation is a stipend-based, nominally competitive position, but this year not even the 10 available slots were filled with interested candidates. Whether the deficiency was the result of a lack of interest or a lack of publicity was difficult to pinpoint, but the head of the Office of Energy and Sustainability, Ms. Andrea Moore, has attempted to bring in more student interest with a Facebook page, which she posted during Earth Week. (Because the Facebook page is still in its first weeks, it is

difficult to evaluate its success.)

However, Earth Week itself went by unnoted by many students, despite plenty of events. On the boys' campus, there was a showing of the film Wall-E, as well as a fairly popular architectural recycling competition called Builder Battles. On the Beren campus, a representative handed out stickers that said "I love New York Water," to increase consumption of non-bottled drinks. A thought-provoking talk by Professor Leventer about environmental ethical obligations and a green building tour went nearly unvisited.

Despite sporadic commitment, students are not uninterested in environmental sustainability. Some of the Sustainability Office's best publicized events are YU Unplugged, an intercampus competition aimed at lowering energy-usage by shutting off electronics, and Recyclemania, an eight-week long race between universities to boost recycled materials. It is during these activities that environmental enthusiasm is most tangible in both campuses. What remains to be seen, however, is how students can translate their momentary enthusiasm into a steadier commitment to helping the environment and Yeshiva University.

LIRR Daf Yomi Shiur Completes Third Cycle

Rina Haller On March 31, 2014, the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) Daf Yomi coalition celebrated the completion of its third cycle of Talmud Bavli. This siyum marks twenty-two years of the LIRR shiur. Now held on two morning trains heading for Penn Station from religious communities such as Far Rockaway and Long Island, the class is run by Magedi Shiur Sholom Fried, Yossie Klein, Eliezer Cohen, and Rabbi Menachem Adler. Benjy Krischer, an original member of the LIRR shiur, and his brother, Elliot, sponsored the siyum in memory of their parents who

passed away this year.

The concept of daf yomi dates back to 1923 and was actualized by Rav Meir Shapiro. His vision was for Jews all over the world to be able to learn together regardless of location. The Jewish community at large would be bound to a set schedule to learn a page of Gemara a day, spanning over a seven and a half year period. The last siyum on all of Gemara was held in August 2012—93,000 Jews from all over the world gathered in the Met Life Stadium to commemorate another completion of the cycle.



Those that participate in the daf yomi shiur during their daily commute on the LIRR are proud to be part of this global movement. Participants range from accountants to bankers, and even include members of

the MTA staff.

The history of the LIRR Daf Yomi is much more recent than the idea of daf yomi itself. In 1991, Rabbi Pesach Lerner was asked to give a class during the morning commute and began teaching a daf yomi shiur. According to Benjy Krischer, an original member of the LIRR Daf Yomi shiur, the response was "very positive."

While the number of participants can vary from five to twenty men or more, Krischer said it's successful in fulfilling its goal regardless of size. He says the LIRR shiur seeks to "to have organized learning for one hour that most people don't utilize."

The challenges of the LIRR Daf Yomi shiur range from conducting the multi-topic Gemara class in a public setting with discussions regarding sensitive matters, as well as maintaining daf yomi in an environment that only meets when work is in session. "As in all daf yomi situations, everyone is respon-

sible to keep up to date. If there is no shiur, you have to fill in somewhere else," Krischer explained. Now, in 2014, learning the daf is more accessible than ever with apps, translations, and shiurim from ArtsScroll and the OU on smartphones and tablets.

Part of Rabbi Lerner's vision had been for traveling Jews to be able to learn the same Gemara. Nearly a hundred years later, the fruit of his efforts is seen clearly as these men board the train to work and take out their Gemaras in unison. The LIRR Daf Yomi shiur relish any delays, unlike their fellow travelers, for the extra time allows them to delve a bit deeper into the daf and gain further insights.

The members were proud to have finished Tamud Bavli, and started again the next day with Mesechtas Beitza. Krischer concluded saying that the shiur gives participants "A sense of [making] the most out of your time. Finding time and places to learn that are 'out of the box.'"

Abraham Foxman, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, Addresses Anti-Semitism in 2014

Shira Kaye On April 2nd in Koch Auditorium, students of Yeshiva University were privileged to hear the Hillel Rogoff Memorial Lecture delivered by Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League. His address, entitled "Reflections on Current Events: Anti-Semitism in 2014," concentrated on the biggest anti-Semitic challenges facing the American Jewish community today and what the future holds for the millennial generation. Foxman has been with the ADL for forty-nine years and will be retiring next year after fifty years of work.

Founded in 1913, the Anti-Defamation League is the nation's leading organization fighting anti-Semitism. Before his lecture, Foxman privately talked with students of the S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program, opening the floor to a wide array of questions. He spoke about his experience as a Holocaust survivor; he was saved and adopted by his Catholic nanny as a child and eventually reunited with his parents. He discussed how his savior acted "partially on instinct and partially on faith," yet at the end of the day, there is no distinct pattern that determines whether someone is willing to risk his life to save another. He believes that someday we will be able to map DNA to establish if people will act in a certain way, because as of now, there is no rhyme or reason for the incidences of Righteous Gentiles or anti-Semitic acts. Oskar Schindler, for example, was known by his acquaintances to be a nasty man, yet he saved 1,200 Jews.

Regarding anti-Semitism in the United States today, Foxman asserted that globally, anti-Semitism is the worst it has been since World War II. Unsurprisingly, anti-Semitism is lowest in the United States, but he

stressed to remember that although we are not faced with the same level of bigotry as Europeans are, we are not immune to anti-Semitic acts. When asked whether he believes a Holocaust can happen again in the United States, Foxman replied that like other Holocaust survivors, he cannot say that it will never happen again. He pointed out that of the books he authored, one is titled *Never Again?* not *Never Again!*

Despite the comparatively low anti-Semitism rate in the United States today Foxman emphasized three specific challenges that we, as American Jews, will face in the coming years:

1) **Changing demographics.** Within ten or twenty years, the largest caucus in Congress will be Hispanic. This caucus will decide how much money the United States gives to Israel each year and will have a significant impact on issues of church and state. According to ADL polls, foreign-born Latinos are 40-42% infected with anti-Semitism, most likely because of their strong Christian faith and their lack of education in this area. However, American-born Latinos are only 20% anti-Semitic. The ADL has therefore concentrated heavily on educating Latinos, publishing Spanish informational packets and sponsoring numerous groups of Hispanics to Israel each year.

2) **Devoutly religious Americans.** 60-70% of Americans say that they believe in God, and 50-60% believe that American culture is an enemy of religion. Foxman personally is not bothered by certain infringements of separation of church and state, such as the Mount Soledad Cross in San Diego, but "when the

Governor of Texas calls a prayer rally for Jesus...when the US Air Force Academy requires church services, [we see] there is still a battle for the future. The issue of religious freedom and religious tolerance is still out there, and that's something we need to stand up for."

3) **The Internet.** In Foxman's book *Viral Hate*, he discusses how the United States struggles with the first amendment right of free speech and civility. The Internet has already destroyed privacy, but it is also affecting civility. When people lose the ability to communicate, the level of anger and polarization of opinion is intensified. Before the Internet, the ADL was able to choose which issues to respond to and which to ignore. Nowadays, however, every incident becomes a major topic because these issues are picked up by bloggers and spread quickly. The ADL now battles groups on Facebook such as "The Third Intifada," a pro-Palestinian and anti-Semitic page.

Foxman concluded with a story about one of the ADL's biggest accomplishments in the last hundred years. The ADL succeeded in passing a 1954 law in Georgia that allowed the KKK to proclaim their bigotry,

but required them to be unmasked; this greatly decreased racist acts. However, "fast forward fifty years and along comes the Internet; the mask is back on the bigot." Although Foxman stressed the importance of being aware of the threats that the Internet poses, all hope is not lost. As Foxman vehemently maintains, "I am an optimist...I still believe in the good of human beings. I know that there are more good people than hateful and ugly people. I have seen changes in this country. Have we eliminated anti-Semitism? No. But the glass is half full."





Graduating Seniors: Save the Date! Cap and Gown Distribution

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Wednesday, May 7
11 a.m.–4 p.m.
Yagoda Commons

Wilf Campus
Thursday, May 8
11 a.m.–4 p.m.
Heights Lounge

YU Undergraduate Commencement
is May 22, 2014

Please Note: No attire will be given out at the IZOD Center on Commencement Day.
If you are unable to pick up your academic attire on these days, please contact the Office of Student Life.



www.yu.edu/commencement

How Do We Compare? The Jewish Intellectual Experience Beyond YU



top graduate schools? Do you think this has to do with their undergrad preparation or rather something that the Jewish religion encourages or fosters?

NG: There's something about YU and something important about Orthodox Judaism that is definitely a benefit to students in terms of higher education. Just as an example, Yale Law School, the top law school in the world, is a very competitive place. It receives the most applications and selects the fewest. Having that said, my class at Yale Law School has about 160 students—4 wear kippot and 3 are musmachim of Yeshiva University. Now, that has to be disproportionate to the general population. Also noteworthy is that something close to half the school—both students and faculty—is Jewish.

Continued from page 1

and take the sleaze out of it. This meant no admissions counselor would write essays for clients and fabricate test scores, because that doesn't help anyone, especially not the students. We hired over 100 deans, directors, and admissions officers from the most competitive undergraduate, graduate, medical, law, business, and liberal arts schools. This became InGenius. The incredible professional experience of our employees ensures quality control and prevents unprofessional activity. Because the InGenius staff is composed of actual admissions counselors, they will call students out on lying and cheating instead of helping them sidestep the rules and dodge the system. And because they are the people who actually designed and ran the admissions procedures at the best schools, we are sure we are offering the very highest quality service.

O: Why do so many Jewish students get into

But on the other hand, there are also things about Orthodox Judaism that can serve as drawbacks in terms of higher education. Orthodox Jews have a great intellectual culture that helps train our minds: we place a lot of value on book education and intellectual ambition, and that all helps—especially for law, medical, and business school. Those are places where Jews have done well in the past, and there is a natural draw there for us. But something worth thinking about is that not so many Orthodox Jews pursue PhDs in anthropology, for example—certain fields just aren't situated within our cultural norms, and that's limiting in a way.

O: If it is undergrad that prepares them the most, what about YU helps students pursuing a graduate school education become competitive candidates for admission?

NG: Really intimate classes and close relationships with professors are especially helpful because your grad school application success will depend on recommendation let-

ters. YU is great in that way. YU also gives students enormous opportunities for their own enlightenment while also providing opportunities to position students for grad school. But a lot of students don't know how to navigate YU to that end—they don't necessarily know how to take advantage of and how to make those opportunities. So yes, having the small classes can be really helpful, but it isn't enough. You have to understand how to maximize the benefit from the YU experience.

There's so much to say about how students can take advantage of what they're getting at YU, but one of the things that I regard about YU as absolutely superior to Yale College or Berkeley—or anywhere else I've been—is the following: not every student at YU is intellectually ambitious, but amongst those who are, you do not find the same level of determination and intellectual thirst at other colleges. For example when I got to Berkeley, I had an experience that made me realize how unique my undergraduate education was. A student in my seminar gave a presentation and when he finished, I asked some questions politely challenging some of the material he had presented. Suddenly I looked up, and this student was about to cry! For the rest of the seminar, you weren't allowed to ask challenging questions, only "supporting questions," and it was so weird for me! It was a new educational environment that was difficult to adjust to.

One of my graduate school professors once told me that he recognizes a big difference when he teaches Orthodox Jews and when he teaches regular college kids: the Jewish kids ask hard questions, push for an answer, read texts carefully, and take the text seriously. When I was at YC I didn't appreciate this quality in the students. Those skills are invaluable, and the ability to hone those skills doesn't exist anywhere else. Some of my Yale professor friends complain to me that their students are good at getting A's

and writing papers, but they don't have the type of care and engagement with a subject that is so powerful among YC graduates and Orthodox students. At YC, I took this approach to learning for granted, and only realized its value in graduate school.

O: Are Orthodox Jews faced with any challenges getting into top law schools?

NG: There's a certain environment, network, and connection that they're not getting. These missing components create disadvantages for grad school, because YU students don't have the same privileges they may have at a place like Yale. That makes it hard to really sell yourself to a grad school against students who do have those opportunities.

Another thing is that a lot of Orthodox Jews, even the open minded ones, are a lot more parochial than they think. This doesn't apply to everyone at YU, but for some, they don't understand the way non-Jews or secular Jews perceive them. They don't understand that their values may not be valued in the same way, and they don't appreciate the way those values may be received. In a way that's great because we have a nice community with imbedded values, but in another way when religious students want to go onto other competitive environments, it's hard for them to understand how they would compare to their peers.

Something else true of both YU students and Orthodox Jews in general is that we all have a little bit of a chip on our shoulder. A lot of YU kids who want to go to law or medical school are very ambitious—and YU has all these great, talented, bright students—but there are also students who aren't that. And while it's great that YU gets all these students together with common values, it projects the notion that it's not so hard to get into YU—and people know that. Maybe for those that don't come in as strong academically they gain a lot, but for those

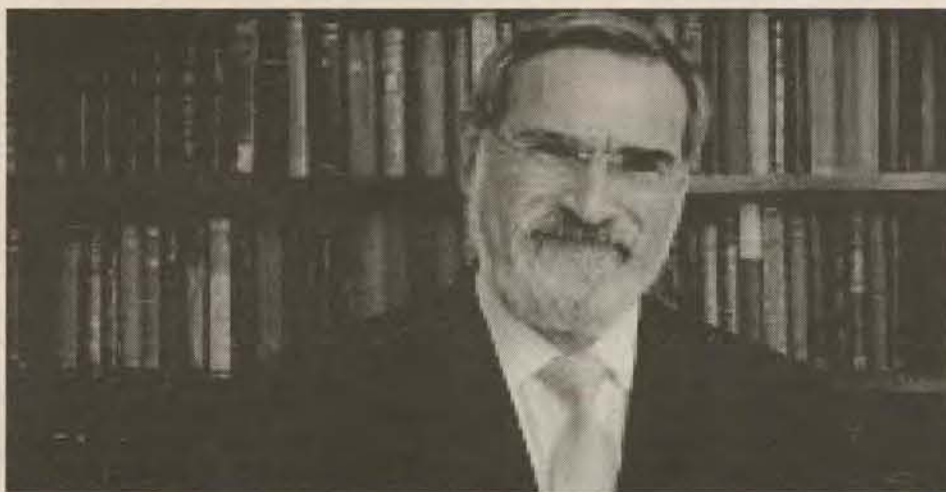
Continued on page 9

Chief Lord Rabbi Sacks Spends First Shabbat at Stern

Sarah Katz As students finished *Kabbalat Shabbat* and prepared for *Ma'ariv* on April 21, 2014, TAC President Sarah Alt stood up to address the student body that had anxiously awaited the Shabbat guest and lecturer. Alt introduced him by saying that she "could not think of a better role model than [Former Chief] Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, because he knows what it means to be a scholar in both *Torah and Mada*, and he is a leader that had contributed to his local community, his country, and the world at large."

Students had awaited the visit of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks to visit Stern for Shabbat and to hear him lecture in person. Many members of the student body have read his books, listened to his *shuirim*, and even attended addresses to larger crowds. But few had heard him speak in the Leah and Leon Eiesenberg Beit Medrash at Stern College. Rabbi Sacks comes to Yeshiva University as the Kressel and Ephrat Family University Professor of Jewish Thought at Yeshiva University.

Since he was on the Beren Campus, Rabbi Sacks' *Dvar Torah* was heavily geared toward topics relating to women. He talked about women and exile, and that throughout Jewish history, women have been the ones



to help save the Jewish nation. Rabbi Sacks drove home the message of how important it is for women to understand their integral role in the fate of Jewish history. He urged the crowd not to sit back and let someone else call the shots, but to pull the reins ourselves and create change for the good. He made sure to remind the student body of how fortunate we are to be in YU, an institution that gives us so many opportunities, and to step into leadership roles. Dana Weinstein,

a sophomore, said that the content of Rabbi Sack's speech was "relevant to everyone in the Stern student body, and it made us feel empowered to be woman leaders of the 21st century." Students remarked that while he spoke to the room, he spoke to everyone as individuals as well. The presence President Joel and his wife, Dr. Esther Joel, enhanced rest of the evening as well.

Shabbat day the students heard from Rabbi Sacks again as he gave over his sermon

after *Torah* reading. Rabbi Sacks' overall message was that everyone has their own role in life and they must realize how much they can accomplish with it. "It was incredible to have Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks here with us for Shabbos," says sophomore Aliza Chase. "His speeches were beautiful, and it was amazing to see such a great and famous Rabbi in person."

After lunch students heard both Lady Sacks and Dr. Joel discuss their experiences of being the wives of illustrious figure-heads in the Jewish world. They spoke about the great opportunities it brought to them to help the Jewish people and to be role models.

This Shabbat was definitely a unique and memorable highlight of the spring semester. In a statement after Shabbat, Rabbi Sacks said "Elaine and I thoroughly enjoyed the Shabbat we spent with the students at Stern College, sharing in the special atmosphere created on campus - full of *simcha* and *ruach* - and having the opportunity to learn *Torah* together. It was a wonderful experience and we look forward to coming back again soon!" It goes to show how lucky we are that we are members of a community that brings great leaders of our time for us to benefit and learn from.

Spring Career Fair Caters to Student Needs

Rachel Rolnick Recently, the Yeshiva University Career Center hosted its annual Spring Career Fair, featuring companies from various professional areas. Students from both the Beren and Wilf campuses gained the opportunity to meet and speak to potential employers from over fifty companies. The purpose of the event is primarily for networking purposes, giving students and employers the chance to form a more meaningful connection that might give applicants an edge when submitting a resume later on. Typically, companies that offer many different job opportunities with varying roles are invited to participate in the Career Fair. Often, they are regulars who return annually for the fair and have had very positive experiences with students.

Career fairs are advantageous to both the student and company. It has been found that students are more likely to respond to job posting and internship listings for companies they are familiar with, rather than lesser known ones, so companies that are smaller are eager to get their name out at these fairs. Employers are also able to get a better sense of the students and their communication skills, enabling them to put a face to a resume that they receive in an application. From a student's perspective, career fairs are great networking opportunities, allowing the personality of students to stand out to specific companies, making their resumes stand out as well. Rebecca Saragossi (SCW 16') found this year's Spring Career Fair to be a great success. "I've already made five connections, and had two interviews. The companies all had extremely impressive presentations." Another student described it as "the most informative event concerning my future, in terms of weighing my options and planning for my career."

While some might argue that these career fairs are unnecessary and only match up a handful of students with employers, the YU Career Center has found them to be highly successful. In a smaller school like Yeshiva, more connections can be formed and employers typically enjoy meeting the students. In fact, more than 50% of companies who have participated in the Career Fair have brought back students for interviews. The Career Fair is also relevant for all students currently seeking internships or jobs, not only to better prepare for the future. Only around

10% of the companies that present at the fair are seeking employees in the more distant future.

The benefits of attending the career fair are significant even if students do not land a job immediately.

Ms. Jocelyn Coalter of the Career Center says that, "Networking makes you more than just a piece of paper" and those seeking internships should make use of networking opportunities. Perfecting a resume and practicing an "elevator speech" will be helpful in a job interview later on.

For students seeking summer internships, Assistant Director of the Career Center Rebecca Weiler has many suggestions as to where to begin the job hunt, which might seem daunting and overwhelming. First and foremost, YU offers a service, YU Career Link that allows employers to post internship and job listings directly for YU students. While any company can post a listing, many are from YU alum specifically seeking Stern and Yeshiva College students. This easy-to-use and worthwhile service can be found at www.yu.edu/career-center, by clicking on the big red button labeled "YU Career Link." Ms. Weiler explains that more employers are posting jobs online. She stresses the importance of creating a professional online presence. Therefore, the Career Center strongly suggests creating a LinkedIn profile, which is similar to Career Link in that potential employers often post job and internships. This year's fair featured a professional photo booth, because the Career Center suggests that a neat headshot serves as your profile picture on LinkedIn, so that your profile will stand out. On LinkedIn you can join the YU Student to YU alumni groups to see job postings specifically for Yeshiva University students.

Finally, there are many outside websites that have been proven helpful to students such as indeed.com and simplyhired.com. Ms. Weiler recommends these two sites specifically because they allow you to create a profile tailored to your specific interests. A student's personal account will reflect his or her recent jobs and skill set, and the websites will notify you when a relevant job is posted.

Be sure to take advantage of the many fairs, panels, and workshops that the Career Center holds throughout the semester, and happy hunting!



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March's Mystery: Flight 370

Talia Stern On the morning of March 8, 2014, Malaysian Airline's Flight 370 departed from Kuala Lumpur, scheduled to arrive in Beijing. Three weeks later, however, the flight carrying 239 people is still nowhere to be found, and searchers are at a loss for an explanation. For the past few weeks, the world has engaged in a frantic search for the missing plane, and the lack of conclusive information has been frustrating and discouraging. The news reports have changed daily, or multiple times daily, as searchers attempt to locate some sort of evidence as to where the plane might be and uncover details about what might have happened. Puzzling is the fact that all transponders on the plane, regularly used to track flights, were completely turned off, as well as the fact that the last tracked location of the plane was hundreds of miles away from its intended route. The search area has covered thousands of miles and many are becoming despondent that any type of conclusive information will ever be found. False leads, erroneous reports, and bad weather conditions have continued to frustrate search efforts.

Because of the flight's sudden and seemingly inexplicable disappearance, various extreme theories as to the whereabouts of the plane have been proposed, ranging from the plane's abduction by UFO's to its disappearance into a black hole. Others suggested that a malfunction caused the plane to completely disintegrate while in the air. Shaindy Ort, a sophomore, commented on the plethora of proposed explanations, saying that she thinks "it's frightening that something that we imagine to be so heavily monitored can just disappear. But I also think that the truth is nobody knows what happened and ridiculous speculations that border on conspiracy theories are only harmful." In the most recent development, the Prime Minister of Malaysia made a public statement that the last known location of the flight, somewhere over the middle of the Indian Ocean, indicates that the plane had too little fuel to have reached any possible landing sites; therefore, he said, the conclusion has been made that the plane has crashed into the Indian Ocean.

Since that time, Australia and China have raised the possibilities of having discovered floating wreckage, but the findings have yet to be confirmed. Even if searchers do discover debris, major mysteries still remain: why did the plane divert hundreds of miles off of its established flight course? Was this a result of terrorism, foul play, of

the crew members, or a freak accident? Or something else entirely? Irit Greenboim, a senior, feels that there is tremendous difficulty in dealing with the lack of explanations. "A big part of this tragedy is the feeling that so much is unknown," she stated.

Meanwhile, relatives and friends of those on board the flight have grown angry with the Malaysian government for their inconclusive search efforts, and are distraught over their missing loved ones. One student at Stern, a sophomore, says those close to the passengers on the plane have been most on her mind. "The families of these people, that's what I've been thinking about," she says. "How can you lose a plane? It just doesn't make sense to me. Where did it go? Their hearts must be broken, living in question like that." Elana Kook, a junior, has been thinking along similar lines. "Not only do I think this is a tragedy for the victims," she stated, "but my heart also goes out to the families of the victims who must feel overwhelmed with confusion and grief. The impact of such an event will be long lasting, and the mystery will hopefully continue to unravel."

The disappearance of the Malaysian plane has thrown the world for a loop, and challenges the 21st century heavy reliance on technology to provide all answers. In an age with the most advanced tracking systems, even the most developed recovery technologies have not been able to offer information on the whereabouts of the plane. Penina Cohen, a senior, grapples with how these events could transpire in such a hi-tech era, saying that she "finds it shocking that with all of the technology in the world that a plane could go missing like that." Similarly, junior Shira Huberfeld is troubled by the mystery. "In the age of constant cell phone communication and GPS tracking, it's rare not to know where someone is," she stated. "The idea that an entire plane can disappear without a trace demonstrates that despite our modern technology, there can still be events that render us help-less."

The mystery and speculation surrounding the missing plane seems to have somewhat clouded the tragic nature of this event but it cannot be forgotten that the families of the 239 people aboard Flight 370 are grieving the loss of mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, and children. The only thing now is to continue looking for answers and hope that there will be new discoveries to shed light on the tragic events of Flight 370.



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How Do We Compare? The Jewish Intellectual Experience Beyond YU

Continued from page 7

that do come in with a strong educational background, they may feel that they miss out on what happens at Columbia, Harvard, and Princeton.

O: What experiences are you referring to?

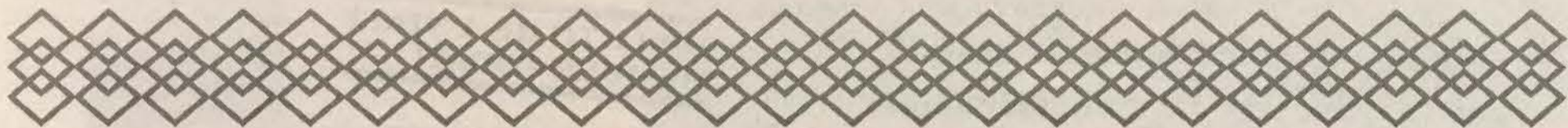
NG: Well there's one thing that I think is the most overrated—for whatever reason, American universities sell an image of the college experience: throwing frisbees on a grassy lawn in front of gothic buildings. And that has come to define a college experience. And even though that's a really stupid way of thinking about colleges, there's something beautiful about it that certainly doesn't exist at YU.

People may also feel that they're missing out on a social experience, one where they can become who they want to become through their peers and professors and all these great ideas floating in the air. This is how students view intellectual growth—they view a college experience that's less about test scores and more about personal transformation. I think that's overrated too. For me, the "college experience" was staying up until 1:00 a.m. learning in night seder, which I think is an important intellectual experience. I don't think throwing frisbees is any sexier than night seder when night seder is so valuable for your intellectual growth, but somehow students see frisbee throwing as "intellectual growth" too.

O: Are there any disadvantages that students experience even earlier on in education—maybe even when applying to undergrad—that can influence their graduate school decisions?

NG: There's some disconnect between what Ivy League schools are looking for and what Orthodox kids are looking for in a college. If these kids are looking for a minyan and kosher food, while those may be good questions to ask, you miss out on some of the questions others are asking if you focus too much on those aspects. What's the intellectual culture at a school, what are the alumni doing? If all you're looking for is kosher food, you're not going

to be the ideal student and you're not going to be the ideal candidate for an Ivy League. I'm not trying to downplay those elements of a school, but you'll be missing out on the difference between Columbia and Penn—they are different institutions with different cultures. But I think things have changed a lot since I was in high school, and if I were to choose an undergraduate institution again (other than YU, of course), I would choose the University of Chicago, which I had never even heard of at the time. Looking back, though, the intellectual culture there is most similar to YU, but I didn't have sufficient information to make that decision.



The Truth About Gluten

I hope this is gluten free. Don't even know what that means but it seems to be the trend these days.



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Alana Weisstuch Today grocery stores and health food stores everywhere are stocked with gluten-free products. This is beneficial for many people with Celiac Disease who cannot eat products containing gluten. Around 1% of Americans have Celiac Disease. Common Symptoms of Celiac disease include diarrhea, anemia, bone pain, and a skin rash called Dermatitis Herpetiformis.

However, many people purchasing gluten-free products do not suffer from Celiac Disease; rather, they do so because they believe that it leads to an overall healthier lifestyle. Peter H.R. Green, MD, Director of the Celiac Disease Center at Columbia University comments on this trend: "The market for gluten-free products is exploding. Why exactly we don't know. Many people may just perceive that a gluten-free diet is healthier." Dr. Green brings up an important question. Is a gluten-free diet actually healthier? The answer, according to WebMD, is that gluten free diet is not healthier because "a gluten-free diet can lack vitamins, minerals, and fiber," says Green.

A major problem with gluten-free diets is that they are missing out on many necessary nutrients found in gluten

in whole grains related to wheat. Products containing Gluten contain nutritional benefits because they are filled with vitamins, minerals and fiber. Some studies say that whole grains can lower the risk of heart disease, type 2-diabetes and cancer. "Any time you eliminate whole categories of food you've been used to eating, you run the risk of nutritional deficiencies," said Green. Therefore, it seems that unless you have Celiac Disease or gluten sensitivity, one should not restrict gluten from their diet.

Gluten-free diets are also not advisable because gluten-free foods are not necessarily healthier. There is no scientific proof that restricting gluten in a diet correlates to weight loss. In fact, many gluten-free products contain high amounts of saturated fats, cholesterol, high calorie content, and low nutrition value. Therefore, when one suffers from Celiac Disease, they should try to fill their diet with natural foods such as lean meats, fruits and vegetables.

In conclusion, people who choose to only eat gluten-free food are not actually taking the healthier route. So unless you have Celiac Disease or gluten sensitivity, it is not advisable to eliminate gluten from your diet.

HEALTH CORNER

Breaking Down the Obesity Stigma

Rebecca Yoshor Though the American cultural standard of beauty has never been thinner, obesity rates in America have never been higher. According to the American Center for Disease Control, more than one third of all adults in the United States are obese. Considering how common obesity is in America, one would think that Americans would approach the problem with tolerance. However, the opposite is true. Prejudice and discrimination towards obese people in American seems to be as rampant as obesity itself.

Dr. Jonny Bowden refers to prejudice against the obese as the "last acceptable prejudice" in American society. Statistics seem to support this assertion, with studies indicating that weight discrimination has increased by 66% over the last decade. Weight discrimination has become increasingly common within the workplace, particularly towards women. Weight discrimination stems from the idea that obese people are obese simply because they are lazy and lack the discipline to exercise and eat well. A tweet written by a respected professor of psychology at the University of New Mexico encapsulates American prejudice attitudes towards obese people. In the process of admitting students to his graduate program, the professor openly engaged in weight based discrimination towards applicants, tweeting the following: "Dear obese PhD applicants: if you don't have enough willpower to stop

to do a dissertation #truth." These types of cruel generalizations towards obese people have become all too common and accepted in American society, and in large stem from an unfortunate ignorance regarding the true cause of obesity.

Denise Cummins, author of Good Thinking: Seven Powerful Ideas That Influence the Way We Think, has explored the dichotomy between the American perception of obesity and weight loss versus the scientific evidence on these topics. Contrary to popular belief, weight loss is a lot more complicated than simply cutting back on calories and exercising more. Weight gain studies have shown the huge impact of genetics on a person's ability to lose weight. Genetics influence the hormones that manage a person's appetite and fullness after a certain amount of food. People with certain genetic predispositions will have more difficulty maintaining a healthy weight because of irregularity in the hormones that trigger fullness and appetite. People with these hormone irregularities will have a more difficulty losing weight than those without these irregularities.

By further educating Americans about the complex causes of obesity, the negative stigma towards obesity can be broken. This stigma needs to be broken down because obesity prejudice doesn't help obese people to lose weight or promote a healthy lifestyle; it just shames and implicates a large portion of

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Once Again, The People Sing on Broadway

Sora Gordon As any self-proclaimed theater geek knows, the best part of living in New York City is the relative ease of obtaining student rush tickets for Broadway shows.

Yet with classes starting so often in the dreaded morning hours, waiting in line for the box office to open at 10:00 a.m. isn't always feasible. However, if there is one show worth shelling out highly budgeted cash for, it's *Les Misérables*.

I was lucky enough to see the show while it was still in previews. Some aspects of the performances may have been tweaked since then, but the majority of the show likely remains unchanged. The production borrows less from Tom Hooper's Oscar-winning adaptation, and more from Victor Hugo's abundant source material, successfully transitioning from years on tour to the Imperial Theatre's stage. The classic story, of a convict named Valjean seeking redemption while on the run from the law, is brought to life by a sweeping score. The very first notes of the iconic score heralded applause so lengthy that it threatened to drown out the opening lyrics of "Look Down."

Hardcore fans of the stage show may notice that the Imperial Theatre lacks both a trapdoor and a revolving floor — props that previous incarnations depended on, especially for scenes set in the sewers. However, the scenery, inspired by Hugo's own illustrations and executed by Fifty-Nine Productions, brings the streets (and sewers) of Paris to life, animating Valjean's trek through the Parisian sewer system in the way that simple stage props couldn't.

Of course, no matter how phenomenal the staging, there is no denying that the true draw of *Les Mis* lies with its stellar cast, such as Ramin Karimloo, Will Swenson, and Caissie Levy, just to name a few. Although this is Karimloo's Broadway debut, he is a veteran of London's West End, and it shows. His rendition of "Bring Him Home" earned

a standing ovation that lasted for over three minutes, and would probably have gone on longer if the orchestra allowed. Karimloo is controversially much younger than many of his predecessors and his youth brings a sense of physicality and vitality to a role that could otherwise come across as understated. This comes across most clearly when Valjean and Javert (Swenson) face off in "The Confrontation," a scene that culminates in a highly realistic struggle. Swenson gives a remarkably nuanced performance, a nice change from Russell Crowe's monotonous performance in the 2012 film. His "Soliloquy," paired with the breathtaking projection of the turbulent Seine below, gave a convincingly heart-wrenching depiction of a man staring "into the void" convinced that there is "no way to go oooooooooooooo..."

As mentioned, the *Les Mis* that I saw was still in the early stages of its previews. Cameron Mackintosh, the producer, was still standing in the back of the room near the sound and lighting board, taking notes and making possible adjustments. Hopefully, some things, like Enjolras's less-than-epic death atop the barricade, are still subject to change. Aside from that slight grievance, the pro-

ARTS & CULTURE

HANNAH ROZENBLAT
MICHAL KAPLAN-NADEL

duction was fantastic, far better than any of its other incarnations (looking at you, Hooper).

So now that the barricades have once

again risen on the Rue du Plumet, it's time to grab your tricolors, guns, and spare furniture, and head to the box office to secure your ticket.



An Emotional Response to the Symphony

Emily Chase As one by one the musicians filed onto the stage, each one began practicing his/her part, touching bows to strings, blowing air slowly through mouthpieces, placing fingers on the ivory keys, as the anticipation of the audience continued to rise.

Then the lights dimmed, and the conductor raised his hands. It was time for the symphony to begin.

Throughout this semester, I have been privileged to attend three symphonies, one at Lincoln Center and two at Carnegie Hall. Though I am not yet an expert on symphonies, I've noticed that the music of the symphony often can trigger an emotion. It seems that feeling has a special connection with music, and the art of composing is trying to capture the music of a certain feeling or experience. Music has the unique ability to penetrate into the human experience and express a quality of meaning and depth that words cannot reach. As Jewish composer Gustav Mahler said, "If a composer could say what he had to say in words, he would not bother trying to say it in music."

As an audience member, I felt the need to connect to the music of the symphony, to make the music mean something. I designed stories and emotions that matched with the music that ranged from high heavenly notes to deep despairing sounds. Sometimes there was a plot twist as the music changed, like for example if the soft melody quickly turned into the thunderstorm of powerful and dramatic notes. The symphony is an emotional roller coaster more than any Shakespearean play, as love and heartbreak, birth and death, joy and despair play across the musical notes, carrying the audience in its waves. Music reveals the nobility and

greatness of the human spirit. As Fredrick Delius, an English composer, said, "Music is an outburst of the soul."

One of the symphonies I attended was a choral symphony, which contained a choir

"If a composer could say what he had to say in words, he would not bother trying to say it in music."

— Gustav Mahler

and soloists besides the orchestra. The audience was given pamphlets containing the songs of the performance, translated into English from the original German. The singing element of the performance dramatically changed my experience. Instead of letting the music overwhelm me, I found myself meticulously following along with the words in the pamphlet. It was more about

understanding the symphony as it was supposed to be, instead of about interpreting the symphony as I wished it to be. Instead of flowing through the music, unaware of what the future would hold, I could now flip ahead in the pamphlet. I felt that the words limited the meaning of the music, making it less all-encompassing. The instrumental symphony, as opposed to the choral symphony, falls better under Gustav Mahler's definition of a symphony: "A symphony must be like the world. It must embrace everything." However, the choral symphony did offer the wonderful synthesis of human voices with instrumental music that possesses its own type of beauty.

Often there were pauses in the music, in which the absence of music gave depth to the composition. As composer Truman Fisher said, "The pause is as important as the note." After the final powerful notes were played and the last of the music reverberated in the air, the audience held their breath as a deep silence filled the room. They clapped and, as they turned to leave, the music still seemed to play softly in the silence.

Theater Talk: YCDS's The Mouse That Roared

Hannah Rozenblat Christopher Sergel's stage adaptation of *The Mouse that Roared*, an interesting choice for YCDS's all-male cast, was pulled off by the cast under the expert direction of Lin Snider with a degree of success that is by now expected. Although a few changes were made to the storyline of the play, such as changing the Duchess Gloriana of Grand Fenwick to the Duke Hester, YCDS pulled it off so naturally that the audience would never know that there are indeed female characters in the play.

A political satire on America's foreign policies during the Cold War, *The Mouse that Roared* is the comical story of the Duchy of Grand Fenwick, a tiny European country whose economy depends on their production of the famous Pinot Grand Fenwick wine. When their stability is threatened by a Californian knock-off of the wine, Fenwick decides to declare war on the United States -- with no desire to win but every desire to take advantage of America's foreign policy, under which Fenwick would receive aid and tech-

nology. Fenwick, which is stuck in the 14th century, sends a group of men, led by the seemingly incompetent Tully, with nothing but armor and longbows to invade New York City, an enterprise that shocks everyone with its success when the men capture, by a fluke, two important men and one very important bomb. After being treated as a joke for so long, Fenwick wins the 'war' and finds itself the center of worldwide media attention as the owner of what is possibly the most powerful bomb in the world. Fenwick uses the situation to create world peace by promoting worldwide disarmament.

Although the pacing of the play was somewhat slow in the first couple of scenes and some lines were difficult to understand through the actors' accents, by the middle of the first act the audience was invested in the well-being of this tiny insignificant duchy, amused by its presumptions and connected with the dynamic characters. The actors' comedic timing was flawless, prompting constant laughter from the audience. However, some of the actors had difficulty controlling their own mirth, even in scenes that required more seriousness.

On the whole, the actors (newcomers and veterans alike) brought depth and believability to their roles -- from the baby-faced Duke Hester (Zach Neuman), whose excited manner and voice suited the role of a child ruler, to the oblivious Tully (Gabi Weinberg), whose sincerity and enthusiasm is endearing even when the audience is laughing at him, and to the Secretary of State (Charles Davies), one of the most convincingly dignified actors on stage, whose interactions with the President (Yoni Greenberg) create some of the funniest scenes in the play. Doni Mandel's return to YCDS as Benter, leader of the Opposition Party, is another one of the highlights of the play; his complete immersion in the role made his character one of the most dynamic on stage.

The set, another Natanel Shafier masterpiece, took full advantage of the space on stage and accommodated Fenwick's forest, the US President's bare office, a science lab, and most importantly Fenwick's royal court



David Khabinsky/YCDS facebook page

in the center of the stage with a glorious background featuring battlements, towers with colorful streamers, and a banner of Fenwick's flag, which rolled away halfway through the play to reveal a radio station, to the audience's delight.

The costumes were a visual delight as well, from the detailed outfits at Fenwick's court to the Fenwickian soldiers' chain mail and tabards when they march into NYC. The effect is supplemented by clever props such as a signpost with street signs indicating their exact location -- Broadway and 116th. This attention to detail was not lost on the audience and certainly contributed to the overall effect of the production.

The incorporation of music, singing, and

dancing into the performance infused it with an additional energy that left audience members smiling so much that the abrupt ending of the play was barely minded.

Overall, YCDS's *The Mouse That Roared* was another success for the society and quite an enjoyable show, entertaining the audience enough that minor issues were easily overlooked.



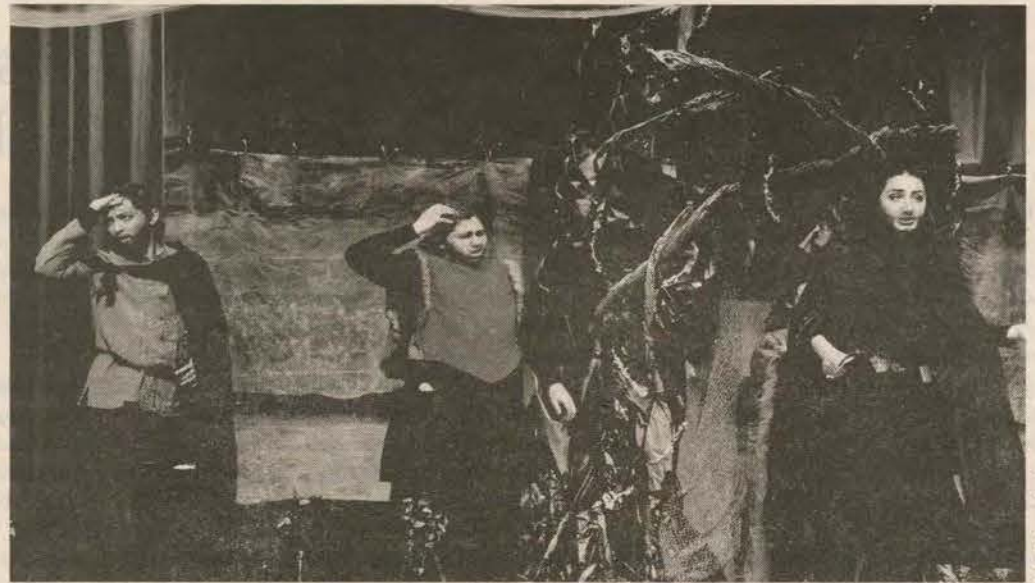
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David Khabinsky/YCDS facebook page



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Irit Greenboim



Shelley Addeison



Sarala Pool

Stern Dramatics Society Triumphs in *The Tempest*

Continued from page 1

The sounds and lights filled the room as well, particularly noticeable and effective as the storm roared in the first scene.

It was a delight as well to see the actors use their space to the fullest, whether stomping, gliding, or in the case of Sharona Kay's Stephano, drunkenly stumbling all over the stage. Most notable was the

excellent Sarala Pool, whose nimble, glittering Ariel seemed to have wings as she zipped gracefully across the stage. The costuming and makeup added fully to the effect of the actresses' believable and well executed parts. Carefully crafted facial hair and garments hand-sewn by student seamstresses were perfectly fitting to each and every character.

For all that is to be said about the effects, the audience would have been entranced (albeit a bit more confused) without any of it. Freshman Devora Scott Thones was powerful and eloquent as lead character Prospero. Malka Sigal and Kayla Miller's hilarious camaraderie would have shown through even without the costumes and the curtain, as they kept the audience laughing with their impeccable comedic timing and exaggerated facial expressions. It's one thing to wrap your mouth around Shakespearean dialogue; it's another to perform it with actual understanding, and in that regard, each one of the actresses was superb. Whether long monologues or quick one-liners, the cast was well prepared and comfortable with their complicated Shakespearean sentences. The standout of the night was Racheli Schuraytz's performance as Caliban; she was absurdly good, all at once disgusting and compelling and oddly sympathetic but moreover completely believable.

All in all, the SCDS cast once again executed an exciting and compelling show for the spring semester. Making the most of their resources and tapping into the exceptional talent of the Stern women from freshmen to senior proved a winning strategy for this Shakespearean tale.



Irit Greenboim

Home Suite: Art Professor Traci Tullius on Her Solo Exhibit

Mia Guttman Professor Traci Tullius is currently an Associate Professor at Stern College for Women and has a solo show entitled Home Suite on view from March 27-May 4 at the Yeshiva University Museum. The exhibit includes a video and ten drawings. The drawings, which were rendered in silverpoint, have begun to fade with time. She sat down with the Observer to discuss the exhibit, her inspirations, and advice for a career in art.

You currently have a show on view at the Yeshiva University Museum entitled "Home Suite." Can you give us some details about the series and what inspired you?

The project started when I found out my family would be tearing down my great grandparents' farmhouse in Oklahoma. That house was a pivotal part of my artistic development and familial history. I remember as a child, when my great-grandparents were alive, playing there. But for most of my adolescent and adult life the house was vacant and my grandparents didn't mind if I went over there to take photographs, videos and scrounged around. There was unused jurassic farming stuff from the depression era all over and my grandparents didn't mind if I scavenged things. Aesthetically, I feel like that house really helped form what I am attracted to in the visual world, like things that are a little broken. I didn't want the passing of the house to go unremarked. I wanted to go home and film the demolition as one last artistic act there. That footage sat around for two years and I never watched it and I put the film in storage because it was sad. But as I was going through all my tapes to back them up and I played the recording backwards and I knew what I had to do with the video. With the revers-

ing of the tape I kind of wanted to reverse time; it was a wish fulfillment of going back in time and putting it back together again. The sound, however, runs forward so to the viewer it is not just reversed footage, but an actual time machine. And at the end of the video, I painted the house back because I couldn't rewind far enough and it just wasn't enough, I wanted to take it farther back in time. I used my own hand to fix the house up at the end.

The exhibition Home Suite also has a series of silverpoint drawings. How did those come into fruition and why use silverpoint? Through the video and the video stills came the drawings. The video was done and I just wanted to keep working on it - there was something about the surfaces and debris that I wanted to work with more. I decided to do the drawings in silverpoint because I was

learning silverpoint for a class I was teaching and it is one of the most archival materials, so those drawings will last forever. The imagery of the house was the perfect subject matter.

You said that silverpoint is archival and the drawings will last forever, but previously you had mentioned that the drawings over time are disappearing. How is that so?

Yeah, because I don't do it the right way. Which was done on purpose. The silverpoint is archival if you work with precious metals on the right surface. I mix precious metals such as gold and silver with baser metals like brass, copper and nickel. And I used paper which accepts silverpoint, but isn't intended for it so it is less predictable. You painstakingly make this drawing and there may be parts of it which the next day are gone, and I liked that. It was like how

I felt about the whole subject of leaving home and generations moving on: you can't hold on to everything.

Have you ever felt intimidated by the New York art scene?

No! It is not as sophisticated as it looks from the outside. Artists are artists and things get put on clean white walls and it seems glamorous and unattainable, but it is just artists making art. The rest is just a distraction.

Do you have any advice for students interested in pursuing a career as an artist?

No half measures... If you are serious about being a professional artist, you cannot do it halfway. That is not to mean you will not have doubts; there will always be doubts, and a nagging feeling of insecurity or unworthiness. But pursuing a career in art, or a life of making art (and we're not talking about as a hobby, or dilettantism) demands rigorous commitment to your craft.

Momentum is also important. Every artist starts somewhere (usually at the bottom), and this might sound like a cliché, but you have to keep pushing your work and making personal breakthroughs. A strong studio work ethic leads to finished/resolved projects; one project feeds the next project; one group show leads to another group show leads to a solo show. Momentum is the artist's best defense against falling into a rut creatively, plateauing, "hitting the wall." The best and most useful skill an art student can develop while in school is a strong work ethic, and the ability to initiate creativity without an instructor's prompt.



YU Museum: A Celebration of Jewish Composers

Sarah King The evening of Monday, March 31st saw a well-rounded gathering of music patrons as well as Stern Sense of Music students at the Yeshiva University Museum, all anticipating a night of music provided by The Momenta String Quartet. The quartet, also known as the Beatrice Diener Ensemble-in-Residence, consists (as the name would suggest) of four members: Emilie-Anne Gendron, Adda Kridler, Stephanie Griffin, and Michael Haas - two violins, viola, and cello respectively.

The first half of the performance saw pieces by three different composers, each using a different combination of instruments. The first piece, Morphic Resonance (2013), was a lesson in atonal composition. Composer Adam Rudolph (b. 1955) described his piece as utilizing "emotional colorations of sound, unusual relationships of rhythm against rhythm and form against form." Resonance was composed specifically for the Momenta Quartet, and this fact was evident in their performance; every player seemed to have a strong handle on their part and the way the four players bowed their instruments created a beautiful visual.

The second piece, Above Clouds (2013/14), by Ursula Mamlok (b. 1923), was

the first World Premier of the evening. A sparse piano part, played by Cheryl Seltzer, accentuated the piece for piano and viola. In her commentary on the piece, Mamlok revealed that she, too, had composed her piece specifically for the players Seltzer and Griffin. Again, the musicians' mastery of the work was evident in their confident, unified playing.

The third piece, Sonata de Concert, Op. 47 (1856), created a stark contrast with the two works preceding it. A piano and cello piece performed by Yelena Grinberg and Mr. Haas, this work by Charles-Valentin Alkan (1813-1888) departed obviously from the post-modern atonality of Rudolph and Mamlok, instead grounding firmly in musical Romanticism. Described in the program as "among the most difficult and ambitious pieces in the romantic cello and piano repertoire," Grinberg and Haas lent a passionate emotion to the piece, giving off a frenetic feel at moments, so that by the end of the final movement ("Finale alla salterella: Prestissimo"), the auditorium thundered with applause.

By the end of the intermission, Sense of Music students (along with the music patrons in attendance), hurried back to their seats for the most anticipated portion of the

evening: the second World Premier of the night - a composition by Stern's Associate Professor and head of the music department, Dr. David Glaser. The piece, String Quartet No. 3 (2014), echoed the atonal styles of the first two pieces in the program. Glaser's String Quartet, however, followed a more modernist approach in its composition. The ten-minute long work, instead of being clearly divided into traditional movements, is instead written as one long movement, with separations and divisions based on tempo and sound quality. Although perhaps not as agreeable to the untrained ear as the Romanticism of Charles-Valentin Alkan, the instruments played off each other beautifully and Dr. Glaser's work was well-received, garnering as much applause as the piano and cello duet.

The evening ended on a people-pleasing note with a piece by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), String Quartet in E-flat, Op. 12 (1829). Though not as rousing as the Alkan piece, the Momenta Quartet played the four-movement piece with feeling.

This evening of music was purported to celebrate Jewish composers, and celebrate it did. Jews have always had a close connection with music; from King David and his harp to Irving Berlin and George Gershwin. However, what tonight proved was that the intellectual, and not just the sensual, side of music is still alive and thriving, right here in our community.



Jonathan Pollard: Nothing More Than a Scapegoat and a Bargaining Chip?

OPINIONS

RACHEL RENZ
SHOSHANA BACHRACH

Elana Kook After his serving over a quarter of a century of a life sentence in a North Carolina prison, the taboo subject of the imprisonment of Jonathan J. Pollard has resurfaced amidst peace discussions between America and Israel. In his most recent trip to Israel, Secretary of State John Kerry urged Israel to release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, including murderers of Israeli citizens, in desperate hopes to restart failing peace talks. Kerry had thought that the deal to release prisoners would be solidified this spring, and again traveled to Israel to urge Israel to release the prisoners upon hearing that Israel had only approved the impending peace plan tentatively, giving the plan "framework" agreement status.

So, what does an American Jew, an ex-civilian intelligence analyst for the US Navy, convicted of relaying confidential satellite photos and data on Soviet weapons and ship movements to Israel, have to do with the frayed peace process? After years of protestors adamantly claiming that Pollard has been wrongfully sentenced to a severe punishment that does not fit his crime, in November 2015 Pollard's case is due to be reviewed for parole. However, despite his pending parole hearing, the Obama administration has now introduced the possibility of releasing Pollard early, possibly in time for Passover, as a last-ditch effort to ensure the release of the Palestinian prisoners, a mechanism that could coax additional concessions from Israel regarding building and settlement freezes in the West Bank.

The transformation of Pollard from convicted spy into a bargaining chip not only gives Americans and Israelis a distorted image

of Pollard's conviction, but is also detrimental to both the Obama administration and the Israeli government. Aside from the harsh length of his sentence, I would like to explore a route less often traveled, and explain why I believe the discussion of an early release to be an outright mistake for both administrations.

I would first like to preface my argument by stating that perhaps this conversation would result differently, or at least strike a different chord, if Pollard's parole date was not in six months, or if there was no discussions of expediting the date of his impending parole date due to his ailing health and good behavior. However, due to the fact that Pollard's release in the near future should be almost inevitable, the release of Palestinian prisoners is not a task that should be taken lightly. With each release, the safety of Israel is at stake. Not from a halachic standpoint, but the release of one individual from prison at the expense of the safety of a nation of people does not seem like a reasonably equal tradeoff. Even though the Israeli government has been avidly advocating Pollard's release for many tireless years, it is unlikely that they will budge on the safety of Israel at his expense.

This burden is something that Pollard himself has acknowledged. On April 1st, Pollard called for his first parole hearing, the first time since he has been eligible for such a hearing for the past two decades. As the United States Parole Commission gathered in North Carolina, Pollard made it abundantly clear that he does not wish to be a pawn in the grand scheme of peace negotiations, especially one which occupies the idea of releasing prisoners. In an Op-Ed in the Jerusalem Post earlier in August, Pollard commented that such a release

of "dangerous, unrepentant murderers and terrorists" would dishonor those fallen in the name of terrorism, "betray its bereaved, and disgrace its citizens for the sake of political expediency."

From the perspective of the Obama administration, the release of Pollard on account of securing foreign policy and peace would set a grave precedence for granting clemency to criminals for greater political purpose. Former NSA and CIA director Michael Hayden criticized the deal and equated it to a hypothetical release of Edward Snowden, the former National Security Agency contractor who released federal documents which revealed the government's massive surveillance efforts through the media of phone calls and other data. Hayden told Fox News, "I don't think it's a good idea just to keep some people at the table, which apparently was the purpose of this offer...the second thing I'd offer... It's almost a sign of desperation that you would throw this in the pot in to keep the Israelis talking with the Palestinians." According to Hayden, keeping Pollard on the table weakens America's credibility as a country that maintains a nonnegotiable stance on the wrongdoings of convicted criminals.

However, I propose that perhaps the greatest targets of such a move are ordinary people. America has painted Pollard as a figure of propaganda. If such a deal is made, Pollard is glorified

as both someone who is a patriot to the foreign relations of the United States, as well as an individual who was motivated to helping Israel in the first place. The danger then becomes the distorted image of Jonathan Pollard to the people. He has become objectified as a means to an end. He is no longer the face of someone who either was convicted of an actual crime, or the counter perspective, as a Jew who bravely risked his freedom to do what he thought was best for Israel. Hero or convict, one thing is certain: the name Jonathan Pollard is at risk of becoming nothing more than a symbolic household name, with no past.



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Torah Lost in Maddah

Makena Owens After being here at Stern for four semesters and having taken twelve different Judaic teachers, I have found only three that I would consider taking again. If you ask me, that's a pretty sad ratio.

Was this a situation I expected from choosing the nation's leading Modern Orthodox institution as my venue for higher education? Obviously not. Like many others, I chose Stern for the unique opportunity it would afford me: the chance to continue my Jewish education beyond high school in a university setting. I did not, obviously, choose it to be caught in a situation forced to abandon certain Judaic classes that I truly gain from. The fact that I have found myself in this predicament shows that despite Stern's reputation as a place for high-level Jewish learning, there remains a lot to be desired. The quality of the professors should be top notch, and the classes they teach should demand critical thinking. Additionally, the variety of classes offered should be in a diverse area of topics within the required categories (Bible, Judaic Studies/*Halacha*, Jewish History, and Jewish Philosophy). They should cover relevant topics on contemporary issues and also blend classical texts to create a Judaic curriculum that embodies the notion of *Torah U'Maddah*. All of these

aspects create high-education, and they've been lacking.

Though this is troubling, a larger question remains: what is *Torah U'Maddah* really? It's actually the fusion of two courses of academic study: the secular and the Judaic. That means a dual curriculum, and that means that there are a whole host of credit requirements that need to be fulfilled. These involve classes for one's major, general education/core classes, and maybe even a minor. But if you've chosen to go to Stern, you know what you're getting yourself in to in terms of a full course load.

Part of going to a small university is specialized courses targeted at groups of students, and the Judaic program is no exception. Here Judaic classes are divided into five tracks, consisting of beginner; lower intermediate; intermediate; upper intermediate; and advanced. Students are placed into a level upon entering school and then may adjust their placement after testing the classes out. Externally, this seems ideal. Each student's needs are catered to and no child is left behind.

At this point, it may seem that since there are so many classes that you need to take, and therefore so many classes offered, that you would actually experience somewhat of a positive struggle each semester

when planning out your schedule. But in a small school with only 1,000 students and about twenty Judaic faculty members, how many classes can really be offered within each level? And of the total classes offered, how many can be offered per category (Bible, JUDS, or other)? The answer is, a very limited amount.

And now let's revisit the first problem: filling all of those other requirements. While I can only speak for myself, I think many students tend to prioritize the secular courses over the Judaic courses. There are several reasons for this. One is that at a small school like Stern/Syms, it's possible that a class you need for your major may only be offered every three semesters, because some classes are offered based on instructor availability and student demand. Therein lies my problem: even if you have found Judaic teachers that you like, their classes may conflict with your schedule—and if a class for your major is only being offered in the fall for the next two years, you better take it if you want to graduate on time. So girls like myself find themselves trapped in less stimulating courses—not intentionally—but effectively cut off from meaningful higher Jewish education.

Perhaps an ideal solution to this problem would be to provide options to Stern

students similar to those available uptown to the boys. Some of the Judaic tracks offered at YC require that students take all Judaics in a morning/afternoon block, leaving the secular studies for the evening. This means not sacrificing one class for another, and being able to participate in shiurim with teachers that the students relate to and can gain from. This may not really be possible at Stern due to the fewer amount of instructors, and lack of student interest in a program like this, but should still be considered.

In a recent conversation with some members of the administration, including Academic Advisement, I presented my problem and how it discourages me as a Stern student. The response was as follows: we cannot guarantee that you will have a semester with Judaics that will challenge and stimulate you, because they simply may not fit with your schedule. You may need to take the professors on the lower end. But we know the good instructors are there.

I will never deny that there are some fantastic, qualified, demanding Judaic teachers here at Stern. But as a student at Stern College of Yeshiva University, the paradigm of Torah learning combined with a secular education, I, and by proxy the rest of the student body, deserve a far more confident and reassuring response.

Banning the “H” Word

Rivka Hia The “H” word is one that is commonly thrown around our circles. Heretic. Often the label is bestowed in jest, sometimes more seriously, but the use of the “H” word always comes about in the same way: someone brings up a religious phenomenon that makes their peers uncomfortable, or they question a current norm held as religious truth. Rather than directly addressing another person’s ideas, opinions or thoughts, many choose instead to label the instigator a heretic, thereby closing the door on any further conversation. The “H” word keeps pesky questions and doubts at bay. The word heretic essentially circumvents the issue at hand and places the blame on a person for having unorthodox views.

As with any ad hominem argument, the logic implicit in labeling someone a heretic is invalid, the charge bringing nothing to the table and offering no resolution. Meanwhile, the questioner is left with the sour taste of being simultaneously mocked, marginalized, and just as unanswered as before. The “H” word shuts down discussion; it creeps into the school system and students feel like they cannot ask questions out of fear of being labelled. This promotes an environment with no room for *mahloket*, dialogue, a cornerstone of our Jewish intellectual arena.

This may seem like an overreaction; after all, many who level the “H” word against their peers claim to just be joking around. But none will deny that words have far more power than the speaker can imagine. In the past, heretical status was a

grave sentence, demanding excommunication, consignment to hell, and exclusion from certain Jewish rituals. So today what exactly is meant by the remark? Are there Jewish theological implications involved? Is it really a joke, an epithet, or an accusation?

The proliferation of this word into our common parlance is driving itself into obsolescence.

The term lacks the specificity of the Jewish tradition’s different kinds of heretics, each of which has its own implications. Even our Rabbis differed in their definitions of heresy, leaving the judgment to the community for arbitration. One question apropos today is if Maimonides’ Thirteen Principles stand to define who is a heretic and who is not? Is belief in the Thirteen Principles the baseline for believers, and, subsequently, a lack thereof the hallmark of heresy?

Because the “H” word is thrown around so profusely, some have found it too difficult to remain inside the ‘approved’ guidelines and have instead embraced their outsider status. In certain circles, the word is actually perceived as praise. Scott Kalmikoff,

YC ’14, an aspiring rabbi, comments, “I’ve been called a heretic so many times that I take it as a compliment at this point.” “Why do people call me a heretic? Because they aren’t comfortable with opinions and ideas they never heard before, even if they are totally acceptable. I’ve come to realize that when people call me a heretic, it was less

about me and more about them and their ability to accept ideas and beliefs they are unfamiliar with,” he added. Some people who are called heretics have reclaimed its connotation as a testa-

ment to sophisticated and truly thoughtful beliefs. Some use the “H” word as a contrast with simplistic belief systems--intellectualizing seems an indictment of religion. This is ironic, since Maimonides suggests achieving the World to Come is purely an intellectual exercise. Many consider the “H” word recognition of knowing a great deal—in order to achieve heretical status, one must know quite a lot about the opposing ideology. To some, it is considered praise of intellect and logical prowess to be deemed outside the bounds of normative

belief.

Whatever your personal association with the word, the “heretics” in question also deserve respect. In all likelihood, that person is not a heretic in the literal sense. Some people stick to what they know and are comfortable with the mores endorsed by their communities. Others have reached entirely opposite conclusions through the same intellectual exercises. Give them the benefit of the doubt as well. Goldie Guy, GPATS ’14 notes, “When an Orthodox Jew calls another a heretic, the danger is that his friend may just believe it. Placed outside of the Orthodox camp, they might be more likely to act accordingly. In using the word heretic, you’ve taken on the authority to say who’s ‘in’ and who’s ‘out’. But let me ask you: What gives one Jew the authority to strip another Jew of their personal Orthodox identity?” It’s possible that turning a fellow Jew away from Judaism is in and of itself antithetical to Judaism.

We tout the Talmudic story of “*Tanur Shel Achnai*” and its principle that jurisdiction resides on earth not in heaven. On a good day, debate should be the hallmark of intellectual pluralism and on a bad day, tension. And yet, based on our current usage of the “H” word and accompanying attitudes towards non-mainstream beliefs, I’m surprised the Talmud itself has not been put in excommunication.

The next time you are engaged in dialogue, address the idea, not the person. Let us confront our differences instead of hiding them behind the “H” word.

“The word heretic essentially circumvents the issue at hand and places the blame on a person for having unorthodox views.”

Interfaith Experiences, Individual Growth

Dr. Ria Van Ryn In a recent article in the Observer, Rachel Renz defends her decisions to attend a Catholic Christmas Eve service and to write about her experiences in a medium representing a Modern Orthodox institution. Renz notes with disappointment that these decisions were subsequently characterized as “dishonorable” and “un-Jewish.” Here, I commend her on her powerful pieces and offer scholarly evidence supporting her claim regarding the potential positive effects of interfaith curiosity. As a sociologist of religion, I study religion in its social context – how individuals and groups create, modify, and live within religious communities as well as how those communities (or the lack thereof) in turn shape individual and societal experiences. My research in particular examines interfaith youth engagement in light of the very concerns that Renz highlights, namely the risk of losing one’s own religious particularity or serving as a poor representative of one’s singular religious community having participated in an interfaith encounter. I offer no normative evaluation of Renz’ choice to visit St. Patrick’s Cathedral for Midnight Mass but hope that the following points will illuminate the wider context of what she learned there.

First, Renz writes in her original piece about her application of Cardinal Dolan’s sermon to the scriptural motif of the “moment of birth as the start of a leader.” She notes that his words concerning the birth

of Jesus prompted her to think in a new and fruitful way about the infancy of Moses in a Jewish context. Intellectual and spiritual exercises of this kind are some of the most common outcomes of interfaith engagement. In fact, the burgeoning field of comparative theology takes this process as one of its core assumptions, working as “a practical response to religious diversity read with our eyes open, interpreting the world in light of our own faith and with a willingness to see newly the truths of our own religion in light of another.” Choosing to attend Stern College for Women (or Yeshiva College, or the Sy Syms School of Business) does not somehow negate the pluralism that Renz and her classmates encounter as part of their daily lives in that bastion of religious diversity, New York City. Interfaith experiences abound here, not only to be sought out proactively, as Renz does, but in their potential role in walks down the street, conversations with shopkeepers, and examinations of great works of art. Not every encounter of the religious Other need or should be theologically fruitful, but neither does that mean it cannot be.

Second, prominent organizations associated with the growing interfaith movement value the religious particularity of their members as an asset. These programs encourage the kind of interreligious cooperation that is only possible when religious differences are honored and seen as important contributions rather than

subsumed in the name of partnership. In fact, some interfaith organizations make it a point to tout growth in one’s own tradition as an objective for participants. Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), says in an autobiographical work explaining why he aims to make interfaith cooperation a social norm that the IFYC exists in part to meet the challenge of “... how to maintain faith identity in a religiously plural world.” Patel goes on to say to a skeptical religious leader that “... one of the top priorities of the Interfaith Youth Core was to help young people strengthen their religious identities by creating a safe space where they could talk about faith.”

My research this academic year at Walking the Walk, a youth program sponsored by the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia, indicates that Patel is correct. Over the course of several months of observations, I have witnessed on multiple occasions high school-aged participants naming learning about and developing pride in their own tradition as the highlight of a particular session. Teens meet once or twice a month in interfaith networks sponsored by local congregations, gathering at those congregations’ sacred spaces to engage in dialogue and service-learning. Along the way, they gain the opportunity to lead one another around their religious sites and meet their religious leaders, answering questions from their peers and even noting when they are unable to do so. The process allows these young people not

only to gain the appreciative knowledge and develop the relationships that Patel argues are conducive to positive attitudes about religious neighbors but also to craft their own narratives about what their religious identity means to them in light of those who do not necessarily share it.

The undergraduate colleges of Yeshiva University offer unparalleled resources for the academic study of Judaism. From courses to libraries to experiential education, YU presents its students with plentiful opportunities to grow Jewishly. Intentionally and understandably, YU does not, however, often make available at the institutional level the kind of interreligious encounter that Renz describes in her piece. What groups like IFYC and Walking the Walk teach us is that such encounters can be uniquely useful – not just in promoting peaceful relations and social justice, as has been their historic purview, but in learning and speaking about who we are and what we value in the context of religious pluralism. As a sociologist, I do not portend to speak to the halakhic and hashkafic complexities that may influence students’ decisions regarding interreligious experiences. What I do argue is that Renz demonstrates deep sensitivity both to the community she visited and to those which she represents, and she does so in good company.

Ria Van Ryn, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Yeshiva University.

Epigenetics: A New Aspect of Classical Genetics

Ahava Muskat The central role of DNA as the genetic information of a living being is unquestionable; whether you understand the intricacies of genetic transmission or not. One of the fundamental principles of biology is the Central Dogma Theory of DNA inheritance, which states that DNA is made up of specific patterns of nucleotide base pairs, which are replicated and translated into proteins. Recently, however, scientists have become fascinated by other factors that affect DNA transmission, factors that seem to somewhat contradict aspects of the Central Dogma. The study of epigenetics has elucidated that certain environmental factors can chemically alter DNA, and that altered DNA is transmitted to offspring.

Researcher Georgia Dias at Emory University has been conducting experiments to study the extent of epigenetic inheritance. Dias conducted an experiment in which he exposed mice that he electrically-shocked to acetophenone, a chemical which is characterized by its "sweet, almond like smell". Consistent with Pavlov's famous theory of classical conditioning, the mice literally froze from fear when acetophenone was introduced to them again in the absence of the electric shock. What is notable about this

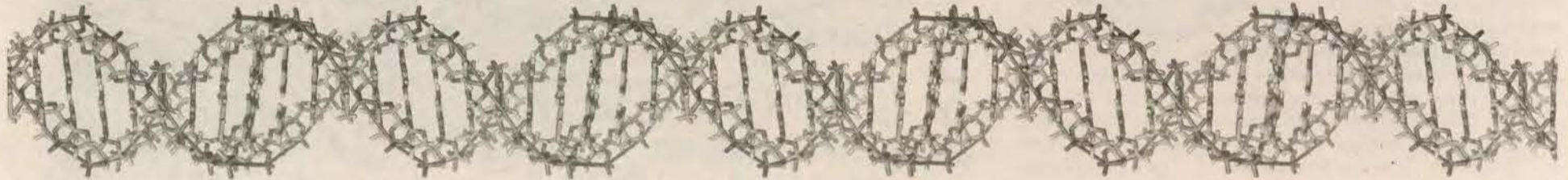
is the effect on the offspring of the original mice. According to the Central Dogma, the offspring of the mice should not be affected by their parent's aversion to acetophenone because there is no alteration of the germ cells, or the DNA that is inherited by offspring. Dias however noticed that the offspring, who had not been conceived during the experiment, were indeed more sensitive to acetophenone than other smells that they were exposed to. The third generation of mice were friskier and more sensitive upon exposure to acetophenone than mice that descended from the control group. Even more interestingly is that all three generations of experimental mice had above-average sized M71 glomeruli structures, the structures that act to connect acetophenone sensitive neurons in the nose to the olfactory bulbs. This study shows the strong role that epigenetics plays in determining the protein expression of offspring.

Another study of epigenetics was conducted by a research team from Kings College London. The team studied the role of epigenetics specifically as it relates to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), which is a highly heritable disease. The research team focused specifically on the epigenetic changes in

which the environment affects the expression and doesn't change the underlying DNA. The subject of the study was identical twins. If one twin was diagnosed with Autism and the identical twin was not, then epigenetic factors were considered to have a role in the development of Autism. The researchers specifically focused on DNA methylation patterns in which genes are not expressed or "silenced". DNA methylation at over 27,000 genome sites was examined and the studies reported the following results: Out of 50 pairs of identical twins, 34 pairs had one twin with ASD and one without; five pairs had ASD in both twins; and 11 pairs had no characteristics of ASD. Researchers noticed that at specific loci of the genome there was a consistent pattern of altered methylation for those who were diagnosed with ASD. Again, this indicates the important role of epigenetics. The base pair sequence of DNA could be identical yet certain environmental factors can affect DNA expression causing only one twin to be diagnosed with ASD.

Overall, research studying the role of epigenetics in our bodies is vitally important. So much so that in 2008, the National Institute of Health recognized this importance and allotted \$190 million for

epigenetics research. Government officials noted that epigenetics could explain mechanisms of aging, human development, and the origins of cancer, heart disease, and mental illness. Some scientists, like Dr. Randy Jirtle of Duke University Medical Center, think epigenetics may play a greater role in disease than genetics. Current research shows that epigenetic pharmaceuticals could replace or be used in conjunction with commonly accepted cancer treatments such as radiation and chemotherapy. Epigenetic control of the tumor suppressor genes directly affects the formation and progression of cancer, which is important because epigenetics has the factor of reversibility. According to Dr. Jonathan Mill, the head of the Psychiatric Epigenetics laboratory at the Institute of Psychiatry at Kings College London, "Research into the intersection between genetic and environmental influences is crucial because risky environmental conditions can sometimes be avoided or changed." While this is a relatively new field of biology, study and research involving epigenetics has become prevalent because of the possible benefits it can have on the future of medicine.



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Circumcision: Comparable to Vaccination?

Yael Horvath and Jackie Benayoun As an Orthodox Jew, it is interesting to see that scientists and doctors are supporting the benefits of circumcision on male infants. Recently, a team of researchers from Australia and America recommended circumcision as a means of avoiding disease. Some went as far as to compare the practice to vaccination. The team, led by Brian Morris, a professor at the School of Medical Sciences in Sydney, stated that one in two uncircumcised males will get a harmful medical condition which relates to their foreskin, which is the portion of skin removed during circumcision.

According to Morris, findings demonstrate that circumcision of newborn males is essentially the same as childhood vaccination. He maintains that it would be wrong not to provide parents with the choice to circumcise their child. Furthermore, Morris states that circumcision is the most direct way to prevent infants from developing urinary tract infections (UTIs), which can eventually result in chronic kidney damage. Scientists also state that since delayed circumcision puts the child's health at risk, it is best to circumcise the boys while they are still infants.

Morris added that the new research should not remain mere scientific knowledge but should translate into action on the part of educators, medical practitioners, policy makers, insurers and governments. Circumcision should be promoted and offered as an

option, and even covered by insurance. The access and coverage should also be extended, especially for low-income families where there is a higher prevalence of foreskin related diseases.

Even with these significant findings, there is a taboo that surrounds circumcision. Perhaps this is related to the association between circumcision and radical religion, but regardless, the practice has declined from 83 percent to 77 percent since the 1960s.

According to a study published in the American Academy of Pediatrics back in August 2012, the circumcision procedure has many benefits. Among them are easier hygiene, decreased incidence of urinary tract infections, decreased risk of sexually transmitted infections (such as HIV), and decreased risk of penile cancer. Dozens of European doctors immediately responded to this Academy's study, believing that "cultural bias" was responsible for the pro-circumcision stance. Ritual circumcision of young boys has been disputed for centu-

ries, but the greatest opponents come from medical associations and political parties in northern Europe. In Scandinavia, for example, circumcision is marked as a form of child abuse.

With the publication of these new findings, the controversy behind circumcision in the secular world re-opened. Some groups maintain that parents should not decide for their child, which taps into questions of

ethics and autonomy. The opponents are of the opinion that the procedure of removing boy's foreskin is in no way or form comparable to vaccination. Instead, they believe that circumcision is unnecessary, or even disfiguring. Yet in many cultures, as we are all familiar with, circumcision is a sacred religious ritual. In other families, circumcision can also be tradition, or relate to personal hygiene or preventive health care.



www.circinfo.net

The Increasing Incidence of Autism

Allison Tawil The number of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has hit a record high. A recent study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) demonstrated that 1 in 68 children are affected by the disorder, a 30% increase from just two years ago, when the number of children affected was 1 in 88. According to the study, the highest autism rate of a particular state belongs to that of our neighbor New Jersey, in which autism affects as many as 1 in 45 children.

Autism Spectrum Disorder is characterized by a wide range of symptoms that affect social function, such as difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and repetitive behavior. In May 2013, the DSM-5 diagnostic manual consolidated all autism disorders into the umbrella diagnosis of ASD. Instead of distinguishing between the autism subgroups, like childhood disintegrative disorder and Aspergers Syndrome, the diagnosis ASD is a one-size fits all.

ASD is associated with intellectual disability, difficulties with motor coordination and attention-span and can express itself as sleep and gastrointestinal problems. At the same time, some people with ASD often excel in music, math, and art. The most recognizable signs of autism generally appear when a child is around two or three years old. Over the years, there has been speculation on the main risk factors for the development of autism. The debate has mainly centered on the argument of nature vs. nurture, or whether autism is linked to genetic inheritance or to certain environmental factors that cause the disorder. Current research attributes autism to a combination of both nature and nurture. Those who develop autism have a predisposition to the disorder by their genetic makeup

and their exposure to environmental factors cause the expression of autism.

Some of the risk factors identified by the CDC include having a family history of autism, such as having a sibling with the disorder. Also, certain drugs taken during pregnancy are found to increase the risk for autism. Advanced parental age at time of conception, maternal illness during pregnancy, and oxygen deprivation during birth has all been identified as risk factors. A growing area of research supports the claim that a woman can reduce her risk of having an autistic baby by taking prenatal vitamins containing folic acid (at least 600 micrograms a day) during pregnancy.

The CDC is investigating the risk factors of autism with the Study to Explore Early Development (SEED). As referenced to in the CDC website, "SEED is a multi-year study funded by

CDC. It is currently the largest study in the United States to help identify factors that may put children at risk for ASD and other developmental disabilities. Understanding the risk factors that make a person more likely to develop an ASD will help us learn more about the causes."

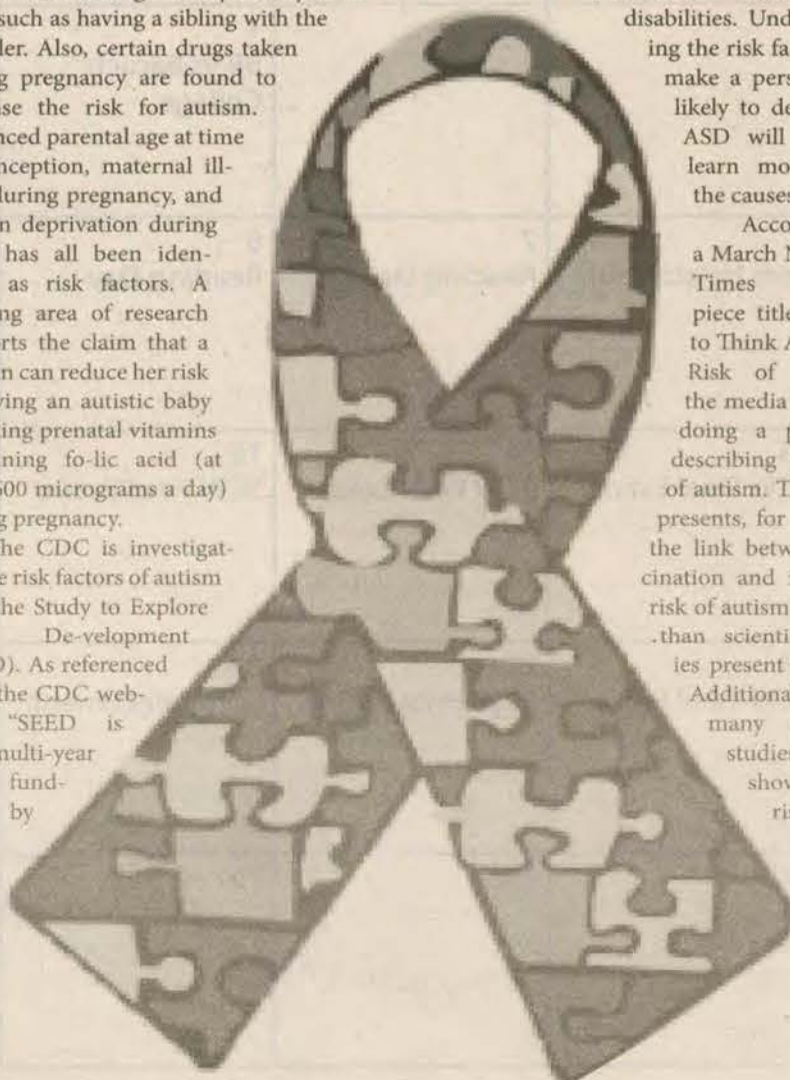
According to a March New York Times opinion piece titled, "How to Think About the Risk of Autism," the media has been doing a poor job describing the risks of autism. The media presents, for example, the link between vaccination and increased risk of autism far more than scientific studies present this risk. Additionally, while many scientific studies have shown the risk of autism in

cal twins increase if one twin has autism, the media emphasizes the minimal link between vaccination and autism rather than the genetic and environmental component. The article notes that maternal stress during pregnancy has been found to be a leading risk factor for autism, but yet again, it is not one widely mentioned in the media.

In order to best understand and help children diagnosed with autism, the media must do a better job teaching the public the facts about autism, which of course, is important above all else. Understandably, this task is a difficult one with regard to autism, since experts state different ideas and take different positions about the disorder, and the science regarding ASD is pretty fast-moving.

Researchers do not know the cause of the increasing incidence rate. It is speculated that it is not the case that the prevalence of autism is increasing, but rather that autism is better identified and diagnosed as physicians and psychologists learn more about the disorder.

Unfortunately, there is not yet a cure to autism, although there are ways to maximize the diagnosed child's potential. Early intervention is vital, and the earlier a child starts to be taught using the proper teaching methods, the more likely the child is to succeed. Another key step in helping autistic children is to spread awareness of the disorder. The month of April is National Autism Awareness month, and raising funds and drawing attention to the cause is crucial. This will allow scientists to identify the leading causes of autism and ways to prevent it, and may eventually result in a cure to ASD.



www.livinghealthy360.com

One Year Later: A Different Kind of Boston Marathon

ST Schwartz Marathon running is generally not considered a team sport. While athletes may train together and sweat together, when sneakers hit pavement each runner is on his own.

Until this year's Boston Marathon, that is.

During this year's marathon, a simple act of human kindness reaffirmed onlookers'

faith in humanity. An anonymous athlete was growing tired, but he refused to quit. Unfortunately, his body had other plans. Before he hit the pavement, Dave Meyer, another athlete, joined the scene. Meyer picked up the injured runner and helped him along. Just as his own legs were giving out, Jim Grove, another athlete, arrived on the scene. Not long after Mike Johnson and Kathy Goodwin joined the team. The four helped the injured man, carrying him the rest of the way to the finish line and stopping right before crossing the line. They put him down and let him cross the line on his own. If last year was about everyone surviving the race, this year was about everyone finishing.

The heroism of



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this year's marathon was entirely different than the heroism of last year, when thousands helped carry injured runners to safety after the tragic bombing. This year, the acts of heroism were not as drastic, but no less inspiring.

Each of the four athletes who aided the ailing runner mentioned that this was their hardest race so far. But ironically, it was the intensity of the race that made them help the injured man. Knowing how hard the race

had been on their own bodies, they felt even more sympathetic and determined to help this stranger.

Life, like a marathon, does not have to be a team sport. No one requires you to be aware of anyone else's needs. However, maybe the days that are rough should be the days we go out of our way to help another person, be it friend or stranger. If there is one thing we can learn from Meyer, Grove, Johnson, and Goodwin, it's that helping others need not be relegated to times of tragedy.

NEXT MONTH IN STERN...

May 2014						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 BB vs Baruch College	2	3 Parshat Emor MES and Israel Club Shabbaton
4	5	6 Yom Ha'atzmaut	7 Reading Day	8 Reading Day	9 Reading Day	10 Parshat Behar Reading Week Shabbaton
11 Reading Day	12 Reading Day	13 SCW Final Exams	14 SCW Final Exams	15 SCW Final Exams	16 SCW Final Exams	17 Parshat Bechukotai Finals Shabbaton
18 SCW Final Exams	19 SCW Final Exams	20 SCW Final Exams	21 SCW Final Exams	22 Commencement	23	24 Parshat Bamidbar In-House Shabbaton
25	26 Memorial Day	27	28	29	30	31