**SECOND CONFERENCE ON FEMINISM AND ORTHODOXY**

**Over 2,000 People in Attendance**

*BY NOAH STREET AND DANIEL EHRENREICH*

On February 15th and 16th, the Second International Conference on Feminism and Orthodoxy was held at the facilities of Manhattan’s Grand Hyatt Hotel on Park Avenue. The conference, hailed as “historic,” aimed at “expanding religious life for women not in a revolutionary way, but through education and the study of the possibilities within Jewish law,” explained the planners. Over 2,000 people attended the conference, twice the number in attendance at last year’s inaugural conference. The demographics were quite surprising, as the conference drew both men and women of all ages and from different nations. There were high school, college, and graduate students, business women and men, executives, mothers and retirees.

Although many topics discussed were solutions for agunot — women whose husbands refuse to give them a get; expanding roles for women in the synagogue; and, in particular, rabbinic tournaments — many women’s public devotion, such as prayer groups and recitation of the megillah; and issues of private devotion, such as kiddushin and zimun. Additionally, the conference addressed personal issues such as domestic violence, infertility adoption, and concerns of single women in the Orthodox community.

Just as the conference attracted a diverse group of attendees, the speakers were a diverse group as well. Featured lecturers spanned the spectrums of Orthodoxy and Judaism, with Reform and Conservative female rabbis, together with “Ultra­orthodox” women and addressing the crowd.

Many of the participating rabbis educated at Yeshiva University, both at an undergraduate and graduate level. Rabbi Saul Berman, Director of the Department of Jewish Philosophy at Stern College and previously served as the Chair of the Department of Judaic Studies; Rabbi Shlomo Raikin received both undergraduate and graduate degrees from YU, and the controversial Rabbi Irving Greenberg studied and later taught at YU.

Other prominent lecturers at the conference who received their ordination from YU were, Rabbi Adam Mintz, Rabbi of the Lincoln Square Synagogue; Rabbi Emmanuel Rackman, Chancellor of Bar Ilan University, Rabbi Chayai Shmuel, Jewish Chaplain at Columbia University, and Rabbi Avi Weiss, Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale and current Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies at Stern College.

In contrast, there were few female professors who had graduate degrees from YU or undergraduate degrees from Stern College.

Another notable theme characterizing the conference was a push towards more Halachic and social issues in approaching the issue of continued on page 5

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**YU Denies Red Sarachek Bids to Conservative High Schools**

*BY ADAM MOSES*

The Yeshiva University Red Sarachek Memorial Tournament, to host Solomon Schechter of New York, feels that her school’s exclusion from the Red Sarachek Tournament is unacceptable. "Cutting women’s public devotion, causing women’s public devotion, such as prayer groups and recitation of the megillah; and issues of private devotion, such as kiddushin and zimun. Additionally, the conference addressed personal issues such as domestic violence, infertility adoption, and concerns of single women in the Orthodox community.

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The Folly of our Ways

Once again Yeshiva University has the opportunity to assert itself for the benefit of Judaism and failed miserably in the process. Instead of attempting to create peace and equality, YU has only furthered the rift between the Orthodox and Conservative movements.

This year several Solomon Schechter highschools, Conservative highschools, requested entry into YU's Red Sarachek Tournament. YU said no and cited a simple cost-benefit justification - YU utilizes the Red Sarachek tournament as an admissions recruiting event. Very few Solomon Schechter students have attended YU, so why invite them to participate in an event that is aimed at garnering admissions?

Error number one: thus far, YU has only admitted one Conservative highschool, for one year, to its tournament, and cites this as evidence that students of these Conservative schools will not attend Yeshiva University. It is truly possible to extrapolate a general assumption from this isolated event, that students of Conservative highschool will bear no interest in YU? Perhaps if we invited them and showed them Yeshiva University, they would change their minds and decide to attend YU. Just imagine the kiruv opportunities (please note the sarcasm).

Error number two: even if there was no possibility of a single student, from these Conservative day schools, attending YU, the administration should attempt to widen their extraordinarily narrow vision and see this opportunity for what it really is. This is a possibility for reconciliation. There is a great rift within Judaism and it only becomes larger as time continues. The Conservative and Orthodox movements only grow away from each other and now YU has an opportunity to lead Modern Orthodox Jewry in the attempt, albeit in a small way, to bridge this gap and create harmony by extending a simple invitation to the students of these Solomon Schechter highschools.

The time has come; an unparalleled opportunity has presented itself. No more rhetoric, no more apologetics, stop paying lip service to the problems. Seize the opportunity,

• extend an invitation to these students and begin the healing process.

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MESSAGE FROM THE YCSC PRESIDENT SRULI TANNENBAUM

It has been an action packed February for The Yeshiva College Student Council. March promises to be even more exciting with class events and YCSC sponsored programs.

Congratulations to the Junior and Senior Classes on the sold out trip to The Diary of Anne Frank. This coming Sunday, the Sophomore Class is sponsoring a trip to Skirmish and a limited amount of space is still available, so sign up now. On Sunday, March 6th, The Zachor Club of YCSC and SCWCS is sponsoring a trip to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, details will be available shortly. Also in the coming month look for more class events including trips to the Broadway hits; Mindgames and The Sunshine Boys. We are also planning another outing to Yankee Stadium come April. So keep watching the bulletin boards for more info on future activities.

This past Wednesday the Macs held their last home game entitled, Senior night, honoring all graduating seniors. We wish everyone good luck on their exams.

Sruli Tannenbaum
YCSC President
FROM THE EDITOR

Noah Streit

Two weeks ago I attended the Conference on Feminism and Orthodoxy, and I came away emotionally torn: jubilant and inspired, yet morose and alarmed. I felt the first two positive emotions because I knew that I had attended a historic event, one that has and will alter the face of Modern Orthodoxy as we know it. Already women have initiated changes that have allowed them to participate within Orthodox Judaism on a plane far closer to the level of participation afforded to men. I believe this phenomenon will continue, though I do not know until what end, however I believe my lack of foreknowledge shared even among the leaders of this movement as they too are unsure what constitutes their final destination.

But as I stated, my happiness is of a tempered sort and ironically, for the same reason: on happy, I weep. I am both gutted and saddened by what I see as the outcome of this powerful and dynamic movement.

Incidentally, I know there are those who shudder at the word ‘movement’ used in conjunction with what this conference represented, because they see the situation as one that needs healing from within, not one that needs an external ‘movement’ to cause change. Nevertheless, I think this attempt at change is generally perceived as a movement and perhaps because of this factor will cause a rift in Orthodox Judaism within the next 20 to 30 years. The rift will be created, because Haredi Orthodoxy, which is to the right of Modern orthodoxy, will never truly allow women a role in Judaism equal to the role that men currently play.

Dr. Sylvia Fishman an Assistant Professor of Contemporary Jewish Life/Sociology of American Jews at Brandeis made a chilling point during her speech in the session entitled “Kol Isra.” She stated that the Orthodox world is gripped by women’s issues with such vehemence because they see it as representative of modernity, something they do not wish to integrate into their lives. Paradoxically, modernity has already infiltrated into many of these circles; the music of Mordechai Ben David and Dedi – two examples of rock music, modern rock movement, has made its way into Haredi circles; within the haredi circles, women are assuming a more prominent position in providing a livelihood for their family by working and the list goes on. Therefore, the fight against integrating women as equals to their male counterparts in terms of religious practice is the last symbolic stalwart in the fight against modernity.

Realizing that there are other sociological aspects involved and perhaps halachic issues as well, though the latter is the source of debate, I still believe that Dr. Fishman is correct and I do not think that this problem will disappear. Our world of technology makes it so difficult to shelter ourselves from modernity and thus the issue of the changing place of women in Orthodox Judaism is a great place to set up a battlefront.

Currently, though some would tell me that I’m mistaken, the umbrella of Orthodox Judaism covers Modern Orthodoxy to the Ultra Orthodoxy – perhaps I can even base this on the fact that both phrases still contain the word orthodox. Nevertheless I am given to conclude that those on the right of the Orthodox spectrum will consider the course that these women are on, not as a healing process, but as a movement that is drifting away from traditional orthodox Judaism. This ‘movement’ will cause a break between the Modern Orthodoxy and the constituents will have to choose sides. The rift created will be as severe as the gap that separates the Orthodox from the Conservative.

At first, I thought there might be hope, because although there were those at the conference who overlooked the texts and halacha and based their arguments on concepts of equality, there was a clear majority who were attempting to create a place for women through the confines of halacha. Nevertheless I realized that over much smaller halachic arguments there have been rifts created that have never healed, thus I’m not reassured.

One other point that I’d like to make before I cap my pen. I was surprised to see the incredible representation that YU received among the many male lecturers. Numerous Rabbis who addressed the conference were connected to YU in some manner, whether in form of their ordination, graduate and/or undergraduate education. In contrast I noticed that very few of the female lecturers had received any level of their education at YU. I’m not quite sure what to make of this.

Yeshiva University, particularly its undergraduate component, is the leading producer of Modern Orthodox clientele. It would make sense that at a conference whose proponents are predominantly Modern Orthodox and whose effects will most likely be felt upon the Modern Orthodox, that a good number of the female speakers would have emerged from Stern and other sections of YU.

However, I ask myself, is this not the purpose of the conference – awakening the latent Orthodox woman? So I wait and hope that this conference and its effects will stir the hearts of our female counterparts and ourselves as well, but ultimately I hope that this process will lead to a healing within Orthodox Judaism and not a movement which will cause a break within Orthodox Judaism.

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Committee issues ranged from peaceful and conducive to both work and play. Jersey. Once again, the peaceful snow-tee sessions was also similar to the parliamentary procedure used in the United Nations. The conduct of the committees patterned after the structure of the United Nations. The catering, for which YUNMUN is pleased with the newly renovated rooms. "The paper provided an informative and fun way to preserve YUNMUN memories," said one young woman. Each high school sent a delegation representing one or more countries, onto an array of committee sessions throughout the day interrupted only by davening, shivah, and meals. The delegate handbook includes a section titled, "Speeches, Speeches Everywhere!" Indeed, Speech after speech; delegate after delegate; proposal after proposal. The conference yielded many effective and bold resolutions, each committee only to be outdone by the next.

After Shacharit and breakfast on Tuesday morning, delegates either had their final committee sessions or participated in the General Assembly Plenary. Final resolutions were passed in committee, while others were ratified in General Assembly votes. Upon completing final meetings, tensions rose as delegates awaited the Awards Ceremony. While not the sole purpose of the conference, the Awards Ceremony adds a touch of competitive and bold resolutions, each committee only to be outdone by the next.

After the festivities began Sunday with the General Assembly Plenary. Final resolutions were passed in committee, while others were ratified in General Assembly votes. Upon completing final meetings, tensions rose as delegates awaited the Awards Ceremony. When not the sole purpose of the conference, the Awards Ceremony adds a touch of competitiveness and seriousness where it might not otherwise exist. The goal of each committee session is to solve the topic of hand, not to beat an opponent. The criteria for Best Delegate and runner-up awards included speaking ability, working with others to form coalition, ability to write and pass resolutions, and general participation. While the individual awards were generally dispensed, MTA walked away with the award of Best Delegation.

YUNMUN Times, the daily paper that updated current issues on each committee, came out each day. Voting the delegates get on their bases to make their trips back home, one could see the paper clutched under each arm to be taken home. As one participant said, "The paper provided an informative and fun way to preserve YUNMUN memories."
Day 1
Announcing that "we are not on the fringe," Blu Greenberg, chairman of the conference, began her invocation by celebrating the Orthodox feminism of women. She defended the movement against claims by its detractors that it would destroy the Jewish family and the fabric of Orthodoxy. In closing the conference's program's advances, Mrs. Greenberg spoke of a "profound transformation" of the meaning of "kolos ha'aretz bat melech p'ninim." She declared that the Orthodox movement is "a child of either sex." In the ketubah, the woman is "sold," and in the blessing of the "chov la'adat ha'aretz," she is said to be "a help to her husband." She urged women in attendance to press their claims vigorously.

Greenberg ended her welcoming address on a somberly surprising note. She proclaimed a "new vision" for Orthodox feminism from within their ranks. She warned that the group's next causes should include the environment, "bikken olam," and peace in Israel.

A plenary session on "Gender and Traditional Texts" featured Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, Rabbi of Kehillas Jeshurun ("KJ") and Principal of the Ramaz day school; Dr. Susan Shapiro, a professor who teaches modern Jewish thought and philosophy at Columbia University; and Dr. Tamar Ross, a professor of philosophy at Bard-Ilan University who also teaches at Midreshet Lindenbaum.

Rabbi Lookstein began his address by stressing the halachic limits on changing liturgy, that he feels he has to comply with as an Orthodox Rabbi. He explained that those prayers formulated in the Talmudic era were immutable according to the halachic injunction against changing the "mishpat avodas ha'aretz," the legalistic formulation of the Sages. However, he suggested several possible changes: saying the blessing "she-los nasi isha." He cited, "the mother's name in naming a child of either sex and in the ketubah, and women saying birchat ha-gomel in shul. He expressed the crowd back to earth saying that he would never "chas s'halon" put the mother's name in a get, as a get is simply "too critical." Dr. Shapiro tried to link Rabbi Mintz's metaphorical representation of woman as the metaphorical representation of matter/body (as opposed to the male form/matter). She was cited in the Mishneh Torah that a woman should be physically disciplined for not fulfilling her mitzvot duties.

Rabbi Mintz, in a complex lecture, began by admitting to a necessary lack of objectivity in the matter of changing texts to fit our "gender bias." She attributed this lack of objectivity to her "dogmatic faith" in the Torah as "d'or Ehem." The word of God. In addition to this caveat regarding the Torah itself, she spoke of a dispute for tinkering with liturgy that had been "hallowed with the sweat and tears" of countless generations of Jews. Ross pointed out that the language of Hebrew itself resists such tinkering, as it does not possess a neutral gender (the default gender is male). After allowing for some minor tinkering with liturgy, she concluded her address by encouraging women to realize that the language in Tanach used to describe God is "expenencial," and achieve equality in all earthly realms. That is to say, that it attempts to relate an (often male) image, but this should not be confused with reality. (God is neither male or female).

"Rabbinic Ordination for Women," a session many expected to stir up controversy, was viewed by many who attended as somewhat of a disappointment. Dr. Adena Berkowitz, an attorney who serves on the board of Rabbi David Weiss-Halivni's Union for Traditional Judaism, gave an overview of Jewish female leadership. Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, rabbi of Lincoln Square Synagogue, then took the lectern and stated that we should be providing a "cultural matrix" within the laws of Halacha. He stressed that changes take a long time to occur, "50 to 100 years" and that "we must bring the rabbinate along with the process, not leave them behind."

After the morning plenary session, eight parallel sessions were offered. Rabbi Saul Berman, recipient of Yeshiva University's Samuel Belkin Award for Distinguished Professional Achievement, and Dr. Sylvia Fishman, Assistant Professor of Contemporay Jewish Life/Sociology of American Jews, in the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Department at Brandeis University, hosted a lecture titled "Kol Isha: The Sounds of Silence." Berman, known for his leniency in matters of kol isha, explained the progression of rulings on kol isha, beginning with the Rishonim who discuss whether or not the voice is distracting, to the "Orthodox" Orthodox behavior in terms of what cannot lack of concentration and arousal. The Aharonim thus stand in stark contrast to the Rishonim and their behavior is tantamount up to the worshippers. He summed up the question of kol isha saying, "The real issue is, how functionally to achieve Halachic goals in the context of sociological changes?"

Dr. Fishman began her portion of the lecture by "deconstructing the Rabbinic Language." She explained that you can't separate the man from the woman who will still find that it is the men who are depicted as possessing a low threshold of arousal, as opposed to women being depicted as temptresses and seductresses. She then discussed the "silencing of women" as a symbolic attempt to strip women of their collective voices and to point out that women's issues are a symbolic attempt by the Orthodoxy to fight modernity.

Lunch began with a panel of several international women from London, Geneva and Zurich addressing their status within their respective Jewish communities. Rabbi Daniel Sperber, Chair of the Alliance of Rabbinic Students at London University, explained to the crowd's delight that "these problems are not Halachic, they are sociological." He discussed three different sociological examples of Halachic changing in response differing sociological phenomena. He explained that most Halachic literature provides a final Halachic without an explanation of the "external forces" that caused the Halachic to evolve. However, sociological changes are quicker than the responses to those changes and the response to those changes must be "refined" and the Halachic "comprehended.

Dr. Sylvia Fishman addressed the attendees in a lecture called "The Synagogue: Expanding Women's Roles." She explained that Kehilat Yedidya, a synagogue she founded in Jerusalem, tries to integrate Halacha and sociology by "blurring the boundaries" and to provide the female congregants with a greater role in the services; for example: the Torah is either taken out or returned to the ark by women, little girls lead the children's songs and women are currently freed from agunot. She mentioned that the "real issue," how functionally to achieve Halachic goals in the context of social change. She ended her lecture by asking how many people in the audience belonged to Modern Orthodox congregations, and of those people, how many knew of kol isha? A resounding, largely number of people raised their hands in answer to the latter question. She stressed that changes take a long time to occur, "50 to 100 years" and that "we must bring the rabbinate along with the process, not leave them behind."

Dr. Fishman explained that the synagogues' stance in four points. First, that man and woman were created equal - "zachar u'negashim ba'aran oram." Second, that Halacha is a dynamic body of law, and therefore, "the dogmatism of" sociology. Third, feminism is a "value lechatchila," and fourth, Halacha will catch up with religious and social change. Nevertheless, Fishman pointed out that the main point of contention is the method through which Yedidya and other liberal Rabbinic movements are using to get their points across. Fishman explained that they ask questions to a group of 10 rabbis, and then decide what to incorporate.

TheSounds of the World's Evils
The final plenary session was entitled, "Feminism as Tikun Olam." As the title intimates, the speakers articulated their beliefs that equality for women within Orthodox Judaism will provide a method for the rectification of the world's evils.
Jeffrey D. Sachs, director of the Harvard Institute for International Development and Professor of International Trade at Harvard University, delivered the Alexander Brody Distinguished Service Lecture in Economics at Weissberg Commons on Tuesday night, February 17, 1998. The New York Times Sunday Magazine called Mr. Sachs "probably the most important economist in the world," and the sparse crowd of thirty faculty members, students, and guests was therefore quite surprising.

Sachs' topic was "Fostering the Rule of Law in Transition Economies." He has traveled around the world advising governments on how to change their economies from Socialist to market structures. Sachs argued that not only is there a need for a new economic framework in these countries, there is also a need for the Rule of Law, which he defined as the framework for politics and power where state and executive authority live within and are restrained by the law. Factors affecting implementation of the Rule of Law include history of the particular society, the country's geographic location, economic policy, national resources, and the culture and character of the country. "One interpretation may seem odd but key," Sachs explained, "and that is the role of geography in any economy, and therefore, its reaction to the Rule of Law." Dr. Sachs showed charts and statistics demonstrating the lawlessness and illegal economic activity in Russia and suggesting the difficulty in fostering the Rule of Law in a country that had become accustomed to a totalitarian system. The same principle holds true for other transition economies.

Another example given by Sachs was that of Poland and Russia. He enumerated the problems that each country faces based on their respective geographic locations and histories. While Poland enjoys a long coastline, it was unable to utilize it for many years as it was mired in the conflicts of Germany and Russia - two nations that have spent much of the last hundred years fighting with each other. This all changed, however, in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent end to Communism. Due its close proximity to Western Europe, Poland has been able to utilize its ports, and in fact has become the fastest-growing county in all of Europe.

Interestingly enough, Sachs commented, Russia has experienced great difficulty even though it has virtually the same economic policies as Poland. Although most of the cities across Europe were built with interregional and international trade in mind, Russia's cities were built as fortresses for the czars. As Sachs put it, "Russia's inward-oriented economy largely cut it off from international, and even inter-regional trade."

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Although few attended the lecture, those in attendance seemed to enjoy it immensely. Dr. Ross Zucker, Professor of Political Science, commented that "Dr. Sachs levied great importance on the role of the state in the development of post-Communist states and the fact that they have been very much underestimated in their attempts to foster the Rule of Law." Students also derived pleasure from the lecture, including Kenneth Sicklick, '98, who exclaimed, "It was very interesting to hear exactly how the former Communist countries stunted their past and future economic growth."
Scheiman, returned from Israel after a
year-and-a-half. "I wanted to get an edu­
cation and represent a gamut of reasons for why a
year-and-a-half. Thus, they are neither in
their fellow peers, and leave Israel smack
in the middle of the year? Why would a
student not wait till the following fall?

Though some motivated students
decide that one year is not enough and
they need two years, the year-and-a-half
class. What compelled these
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Yeshiva Battles Cherokee for Parking Spot

BY AKIVA HERZFELD

Two years ago, the squabble between YU administrators and Mr. Rice over the parking lot exploded into a forceful confrontation. The Dean of Libraries, Pearl Berger, parked her car near Mr. Rice’s. Her windshield was smashed by a rock. A YU security guard said that he saw Mr. Rice throw the rock, and YU officials alleged that Mr. Rice was angered by the proximity of Pearl Berger’s car to his own.

The incident made news in the neighborhood, “The school assumes that they own everything in the neighborhood,” says Ed Rice. “But they don’t own my property, and they don’t own me. That’s where the conflict began.”

Members of the YU administration say that Ed Rice is “dangerous” and a “psychiatric case,” who ought to be “institutionalized.” They want him forcibly removed from campus.

In pending litigation, YU lawyers will ask the court to do just that. A high-ranking member of the administration, who requested anonymity (for obvious reasons) said, “I want nothing to do with that dangerous son-of-a-bitch,” and explained that lawyers would argue that “Ed Rice is a persistent danger to the students of Yeshiva University.”

Ed Rice vehemently disputes these charges made against him by the Yeshiva University administration. He asserts that he is a “normal” person, and he responded to Yeshiva allegations by saying, “They are full of (explicative deleted).” He continued, “They (the Yeshiva administration) think that the spot is theirs, that this house is theirs — hell, they think that I’m theirs. . . . Let’s see them try to take me!”

Mr. Rice lives directly across the street from Furst Hall, at 319 165th Street. His house and his parking spot are highly conspicuous.

His house is sand-colored, four-stories tall, and has a quaint little gate in front of it. From the side of the house hang three flags: an American flag, a flag of the US Army, and a flag of pirate ships — the skull and crossbones. Large crucifixes and other mysterious objects are visible through the windows. In bold black print, two wooden signs posted on his second floor porch read, “WALKING HAWK,” and “OMEGA I.” Often, especially during the summer time, hard rock music blasts out from within the house. A sign on the inner door of the house advises people not to tresspass: it says, “Anyone Violating The Peace Will Be Eaten.”

But Ed Rice’s house has not angered Yeshiva University officials as much as his car has. Ed Rice’s car, a 1972 red Stag — a British sports car made by the makers of Jaguar — is parked in the middle of parking lot A of Yeshiva University! It is set off from the other cars in the lot by bright yellow paint, a pile of yellow bricks, and several wooden barrels. YU officials claim that the whole lot is theirs. One official said, “This guy woke up one morning — probably having a bad day — and he decided to set up a garden in our parking lot. It is not his property.” Mr. Rice says that it is his property. And he added that when YU set up barriers along 185th street, thus eliminating all the parking spots, they made an agreement with his mother that her family could park in parking lot A. “I used to have several cars and trucks parked there,” Mr. Rice says, “but when YU set up the barriers, they reneged on the agreement.”

The incident made news in The Commentator. This newspaper ran a headline proclaiming “Police Arrest Crazed Vandal.” Ed Rice’s name was not printed “as per request of the authorities,” but a photograph of Mr. Rice being led away from his house in handcuffs was displayed next to the article. The majority of the information for the article was provided by YU Security Chief Don Sommers. He characterized the “vandal” as “emotionally disturbed,” and then he went on to say that Mr. Rice has been a “danger” to YU, ever since his mother passed away and stopped giving him medicine. “With this guy, you never know what to expect,” Sommers declared.

Ed Rice was charged with criminal security guard over a “tennis ball.” In another incident, he reportedly chased a person down First Street with a machete. In addition, YU employees who park in parking lot A have complained that YU security guards throw them from the roof of his house.

Yeshiva Security Chief Don Sommers warned all students to “stay far away from this man.” A rumor circulating among YU employees says that Jeffrey Socol, Associate Director of Facilities Management, never parks his car in parking lot A, because he is afraid of the next door neighbor. An official described him as, “totally crazy . . . an absolute danger to the students and society . . . unpredictable . . . and definitely not a good neighbor.”

Mr. Rice denied the veracity of the charges leveled against him, and he said that he is not even excessively “upset” at YU for attacking him. In response to the rock-tossing incident, he said, “Kids throwing rocks broke that lady’s windshield . . . Dominicans have rock fights.” (YU students support Ed Rice’s claim that Dominicans kids do rock fights. A RIETS student even said that he has seen kids tossing rocks down from the elevation above parking lot A.) “Does it make any difference to you,” Mr. Rice asked, “that I would break a woman’s windshield on my property? The kid who wrote that article got paid to say I’m a good neighbor.”

It was because YU officials made him pay for the damage done to Pearl Berger’s car that Mr. Rice put up barriers in the parking lot. “After that,” he said, “No more Rice Guy! . . . What is it they say? High walls make good neighbors?”

Mr. Rice also defended himself against other charges. “I’m the nicest guy you ever met in your life,” Rice said, “but in any life not to offend anyone; in return, I don’t want anyone to offend me.” He continued, asserting, “What they say, I am not. . . .”

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"Let us not have a Balkanization of this classroom."

Talking in class usually elicits this response from Dr. David Johnson, a professor who is known for provoking philosophical discourse with his students. "Philosophy is about all of us focusing together on the problem at hand. While Dr. Johnson is correct regarding this point, it is remarkably difficult to refrain from speaking with other students during one of Dr. Johnson’s lectures. It is hard not to share one’s thoughts with another classmate when the issues under discussion are of such eminent importance. It is equally difficult to remain silent when Dr. Johnson meanders into class, usually clutching a cup of coffee and with unabashed candor raises one of the following questions in front of his complacent students: How exactly do you know that all green things are green? Go ahead. Take the time to think.

If Dr. Johnson, professor of philosophy at Yeshiva University, won’t get you talking, at the very least he will get you thinking—and if you’re careful you might find yourself brooding pensively over the issues that he raises. That, in fact, is what Dr. Johnson can be seen doing every day in front of Furst Hall. Invariably dressed in black and clad in his distinctive white beard, Dr. Johnson passes the time until the start of his greatest living philosopher. Since leaving Princeton, Dr. Johnson has taught at UCLA, among others.

Dr. Johnson grew up in Lincoln, Nebraska and attended the University of Nebraska as an undergraduate. His early interests were in history and math. This course work eventually led Dr. Johnson into the study of logic, which in turn spurred his interest in philosophy. One of the greatest influences on Dr. Johnson was his brother, Edward, who is currently the chair of the Philosophy Department at the University of New Orleans. Edward Johnson, who is exactly two years older than his brother, left a thick trail of books around the house for his younger brother to follow. The two would later diverge in their writings, one becoming a leading liberal philosopher and the other a conservative, politically-minded theist. At the University of Nebraska, Dr. Johnson went on to major in philosophy and studied under Professor Robert Audi, who is better known as the editor of The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy. (Dr. Johnson can be found in that work as the author of the entry entitled “Grue,” a version of the problem of induction.). After studying philosophy at the University of Nebraska, Dr. Johnson continued as a graduate student at Princeton University. There, Dr. Johnson worked on his dissertation which was on the existence of Gilbert Harman and was strongly influenced by Saul Kripke, who Dr. Johnson considers to be among the greatest living philosophers.

Dr. Johnson has also just completed his new book, demonstrating that there is no good argument against the existence of God. As sure as two plus two equals four, Dr. Johnson is able to logically demonstrate that G-d exists —given some chalk and twenty minutes of your time. Dr. Johnson has also just completed writing a book which he has titled Hume, Holism and the Holy. In it, Dr. Johnson critiques David Hume —whom he has labeled the greatest dead philosopher, for his views concerning belief in the occurrence of miracles. David Hume, and others who have attempted to articulate Hume’s argument, held that there is no good reason to believe reports concerning the occurrence of miracles, and thus, no good reason to believe in the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In contrast, Dr. Johnson, in his new book, demonstrates that Hume’s argument is severely misguided. Dr. Johnson claims that there is no good argument against the credibility of the miraculous, even if the miracle is based on solid testimony.” Thus we are justified in our religious beliefs.

Student Personal Reflections

Taking a philosophy course with Dr. Johnson can enliven your introduction into the world of philosophical argumentation. Philosophy, according to Dr. Johnson, is the study of the logical validity and soundness of arguments. All arguments must first be evaluated using the rules of logic. Once deemed logically valid, the “truth value” of each premise must be assessed to determine the soundness of the argument. This exercise is repeated in class with the claims of both renowned philosophers and aspiring students.

Students are encouraged to offer arguments, and those claims are then examined by Dr. Johnson and his class. The give and take of classroom discussion is usually colored with outrageous and outlandish scenarios, which makes class all the more entertaining and enjoyable. But what makes Dr. Johnson’s classes most enjoyable, is his overwhelming confidence in the rules of logic coupled with a sincere and humble pursuit of truth. “Many famous arguments are bad. You can count on both hands the philosophers who were careful.” With great respect and enthusiasm, Dr. Johnson loves to expose bad arguments and to propose good ones. Notwithstanding what he says about David Hume and Saul Kripke, Dr. Johnson is undoubtedly one of the best.
thought that YU officials might try to "ruin" this reporter's life. He said, "Do not print the article [Red] without first asking for your father's permission.

The following information was gathered through personal interviews and information provided by the company overview of Walking Hawk, Inc., and from information about Ed Rice on the Internet at www.catchafire.com.

Ed Rice is a regular man. Dark-skinned, he says he is a "rich mixture of African and Cherokee." Of his Native American heritage he said, "We were here 400 years before the revolution." Standing over 6 feet tall and possessing striking features, a female employee on campus described Mr. Rice as, "very handsome." He is eloquent and well educated, possessing, he claims, a DDS, a Masters degree in Nuclear Engineering, and a degree in electrical engineering. He maintains that he is a "Blackfoot Cherokee Indian Chief," which can "bother" many people.

In his house, a large collection of bow and arrows are a strong testament to his feelings for his heritage.

His life was marked by history with YU students, who, he finds, can often be eccentric. Ed recalled that at the same time when he went to off campus for military, there was a problem with overcrowding in the YU dormitory. YU officials approached his mother, and she rented out his room to dormitory officials; YU students actually used his "quarters" as a dormitory.

Since he and his mother lived in the Washington Heights community for such a long time — since the 1950's — Ed is well acquainted with YU history and the history of the general community. Ed said that in the 50's, all the houses on 185th street used to look like his, and they used to come down to the YU and walk the Harlem River. On Amsterdam Avenue, town houses stood where Beller Hall, Rutgers, and Kresge Hall now are built. "The Beachwood Hotel," a hotel featured in a famous song by Elvis Presley, according to Ed, existed two blocks up from Furst Hall. "YU," Ed said, "used to have a policy of incorporation into the community, rather than separation... then, it was local neighborhood, with families and kids; very vibrant, multicultural — Jewish, German, Irish — it was little UN, very quiet and safe.

Currently, Ed said that he is at work videotaping a documentary about the community. "It is about my mother — a famous missionary who created a college fund — and how she lived and interacted with the community." Because of his mother, many of the students were able to attend college in New York, and they lived in this house.

"This is not the only project that Ed is working on," he said. "I'm a shoots," he called it. "And I shoot a thing. I use bows, rifles, bullets, rocks, basketballs, watercolors, and anything." He described himself not only as a "shootist," but also as, "a pirate, a fine artist, a lettered musician, a military veteran, a famous multicultural audio-engineer in America, a Blackfoot Cherokee Chief, and the CEO and chief engineer of Walking Hawk, Inc." These titles help explain some of the stories adorning his house, and they help explain who exactly Ed Rice is.

One thing that is certain about Ed Rice is that he is a talented artist. The room in which we sat inside his house was littered with fascinating marvels, but the most beautiful aspect to the room was the art that adorned his walls. There were oil paintings, watercolors, and stained glass windows, with the subjects derived variously from self-portraits to illustrations of family members. More of Ed's artwork can be seen on the Internet at www.catchafire.com.

The site labels itself, "The Choice for the Progressive Urbanite: The First Black Web Station." Ed's works are featured on the site as that of "the city's most influential". They used strikingly painted art of an Indian in deep contemplation, wearing the traditional headdress. In his painting, "The Moon Glow," a dark-skinned woman, with a single breast exposed, sits shrouded in darkness, as a beacon of light shines onto her face casting brightness onto her countenance and onto the verdant grass and yellow flowers behind her. Other works by Ed at the site include "Mountain Music," "Peace & Quiet," "Mountain Music 2," "Peace On Earth," and "Art. Ti. Facts.

Nevertheless, while Ed Rice's claim of being a "fine artist" has been verified by The Commentator, his assertion that he is a "famous musician" has yet to be confirmed. It is known that he worked for Walking Hawk, Inc., and Omega I is a subsidiary of Walking Hawk. "We are the next wave. Whatever it is we do to that is music, it is music. If we have produced... rock and roll, R&B, we either produced it, or worked on it... (In) any record store, you can still get the music..." Ed added, "Ten Wheel Drive is a concept that we helped create, a revolutionary blend in rock and roll.

For his audio-visual achievements, Ed says that he has won an "Emmy" and many "Clio" awards. Material received from Ed reads as follows. "In 1981, Mr. Rice went to work for Gotham Recording Corporation as Vice-President of Engineering. Gotham Recording Corporation at that time was the largest independent production facility on the east coast... he was also its first Audio Engineer, and was responsible for hiring everyone from Count Basie to Little Richard. He holds the distinction of being the only audio engineer to record all of Elvis Presley's 50s and 60s albums. He was also a technical consultant on a project called 'Multiplication Rock,' an educational program still running on PBS. He has won numerous awards for his work in advertising. The one he is most proud of was for work done on the New York Coalition for 'Give a Damn.'"

"In 1970, Mr. Rice formed Audio One Recording Corporation. Audio One was nearly closed down in 1981... Mr. Rice is at present the President of Walking Hawk Inc., a company that he controls and is currently involved in the fine arts and audio-visual production arts." The Company Overview says that "The company has produced and aired' a number of different works. They include, 'The Adventures of the Black Man in America," which centers around "significant men and women," and "The Music Tree," a show prepared for radio and television, that "embraces the very heart of American music... The Company Overview also says, that "We are currently in production on the first book of the Bible, 'Genesis,' narrat-ed by the ubiquitous Rosco Bill Mercer and America's foremost voice-over-stars." Ed told this writer, "I've also worked on a rock opera." He added, "There is a special song on that gnome, Scroog, and says that he has proof of his awards. However, Elise Danson, of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, said, "I have no records of either Ed Rice or a show called 'Multiplication Rock.'" An operator at the New York branch of the National Academy, after doing a search for the record, said, "It's strange; he is not showing up.

As proof to his musical prominence, however, Ed provided a letter from Thomas C. Lenz, the Dean of Parsons School of Design, inviting Mr. Ed Rice to teach "with us in the New School's new bachelor degree curriculum in Jazz and Related Contemporary Music." The other proof to his musical talent, of course, is the music that we all can sometimes hear as we pass his house.

Certainly not lacking a quirky side, Ed Rice is a baffling mystery. A talented artist, an eloquent orator, and a musician, what Ed seems to like most is to entertain others. In a letter to his former music teacher, he showed sincere interest in the daily lives of YU students whom he knew. However, his love for the New School was only surface. He passed a rifle and crossbow on the floor to his left during the interview, his ostentatious decoration of his house. His opinions, all are frightful matters to the YU administration.

Ed Rice, a narrow man who should be extracted from the land he inherited from his mother? Is he a "danger" to YU students? The courts will decide.
All the News That is Fit to Print: The Commentator Online

BY JOSHUA U. KLEIN

As long as there has been a Yeshiva College student, there has been a stereotypical Yeshiva College student. This YC Everyman has endured a myriad of indignities and affronts. However, one statistic that the YC student has never been accused of lacking is a tenacious willingness to express a personal opinion.

On this consideration in mind, it is not at all surprising that the newest addition to The Commentator website (www.yucommentator.com) is a message board. Brainchild of Co-Editor-in-Chief Ari Kahn, the message board was created in order to provide a medium for students to easily and publicly express their assessments of classes and professors they have taken. Nevertheless, since its inception on February 12, the messages posted have occasionally crept outside the bounds of mere course evaluation.

The Commentator site was developed and continues to be maintained by webmasters and YC computer science majors Ben Sandler and Josh Yuter. They explained that having a message board online is important not only in order to expand readership; it also acts as a vital complement to the official Yeshiva University website. "For someone searching for information about YU," Sandler said, "the [website] probably has more useful information than the official website does."

Since its introduction in November 1997, the virtual home of the newpaper has proven to be immensely popular. Total monthly hits hover around 4,000. As can be expected, peak visitation occurs on the days immediately following the "publication" of a new issue. For the first day alone of the last issue, the site registered 544 hits. Additionally, the online version of the newspaper is complete and available to its readership earlier than the printed version, as it is spared the time associated with physical printing. This benefit is enhanced by the recent introduction of a Commentator mailing list—members are notified via email as soon as a new issue is introduced.

Webmasters Yuter and Sandler have access to a wide variety of statistics regarding how many hits the site gets, where they are coming from, and when they are received. They report that The Commentator Online entertains numerous guests from other colleges with large Jewish communities, including Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania. Many other visitors find The Commentator through search engines such as Yahoo and AOL. These include computer users from Israel, Canada, Hungary, Belgium, Germany, and Italy. Nevertheless, most of the hits originate in the various computer labs on campus (i.e. Gottesman Library, Belfer Hall, etc.).

The frequency, Yuter explained, is due to a lack of publicity: "The only people that know about the website are either people who found it by accident, or who got the printed edition of the paper, where it is advertised."

The Commentator staff is presently exploring the possibility of advertising in Jewish community newspapers, such as the Jewish Week and the Jewish Press.

One is tempted to predict that the new message board will help stir up some additional hype. During its first ten days of existence, almost forty messages have been posted. The self-description offered by the message board reads "This is an open forum for YU students to post their opinions of courses and professors at YU."

Questioned as to how this arrangement differs from the message board conducted by the Dean's Office at the end of each semester, Sandler explained that the "Scantron" evaluations purposely avoid asking "dangerous" questions. The message board, on the other hand, allows more freedom for students to fully express their opinions. Sandler also raised the benefit of widespread and immediate availability to the student body, as opposed to the secrecy that shrouds the official evaluations.

An interesting feature of the message board is that it offers the option of posting messages anonymously. Although the "anonymous" option may help contribute to the honesty of the evaluations, the webmasters acknowledge that it also facilitates the posting of "some pretty colorful stuff." Some of the evaluations have been rather brutal and even vulgar, with references to various professors' sexual preferences. In fact, the crudeness of the material posted caused one visitor, who identified himself only as a "former student," to question whether the students posting some of the messages are truly "Torah Jews." Nevertheless, the webmasters explained, there is no real way to force people to reveal their identities. Even if a name was required, people could post messages using other people's names. Curious messages have been posted under the names of Rabbi Lamm, Sy Syms, and Dean Jaskoll. When asked if he was surprised by the seeming immorality of some of the messages, Yuter replied, "I am annoyed that it happened, but not surprised that it did."

In reaction to flagrant abuse of the message board, Editors-in-Chief Ari Kahn and Noah Streit have created an official set of guidelines. In brief, students are asked to provide constructive criticisms and praises of professors. Any vulgar or insignificant statements will be deleted before they have an opportunity to enter the webpage, as all messages will be seen by the webmasters before they go up.

"I am disappointed that such a useful opportunity has already been maligned by students exercising their destructive natures," said Streit.

What else is in store for The Commentator Online? Possible future enhancements include an expanded message board, perhaps linked to specific articles; a chat room; a search engine for the Commentator site; and in the very near future, public opinion polls on issues relevant to Yeshiva University students and the Jewish community at large.
Versace at the Met

BY MORDECAI LEVOVITZ

"The time that we have at our disposal is elastic; The passions we feel expand it." - Marcel Proust

It is this quote that is displayed on the entrance to the new exhibit, at the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It sets the tone for what lies ahead, for within moments after entering the exhibit, one is bombarded with color, music, power, sex, and emotion. Upon lifting his eyes and regaining focus, the viewer comes to realize that the room is just full of high-bunched faceless mannequins wearing second hand frocks. However, there is something different about this wardrobe; it is something vulgar, yet beautiful, disturbing, yet wonderful. It is Gianni Versace.

The Versace exhibit is a tribute to the slain designer, who was a frequent visitor and generous patron of the Metropolitan Museum. Since his death, many of his designs have been displayed in an advertisement or campaign of any sort, it is instead a display of art for the purpose of study and understanding. It calls for an analytic examination of Versace's most famous works. The museum treats Versace as they would any other artist. What was most striking for me was the realization that fashion is one of the most basic forms of expression, and consequently, certainly worthy of intense research and introspection. Not only does it express the emotional needs and wants of a people, it fuels the mind, as other arts do, but it also is the primary form of bodily expression. We introduce our bodies to the world through our clothing, thus the art of fashion gives us unique insights into the delicate relationship between our minds and our bodies.

The horseshoe shaped exhibition hall is divided into six sections. The first is the landmark collection. This includes famous pieces that were exposed to the world due to their being worn by celebrities or models. Here they stand without being inhabited by the most beautiful and most famous; there are no pictures of the celebrities wearing the outfits, in fact, the faces of the mannequins are covered, all in order to enforce a new and sustained examination of the clothing itself. We are first introduced to Versace's famous silk print gowns and yes, we are here when we see the audacity of Versace's taste. He deliberately takes two seemingly opposing patterns and in full force imposes one on the other. He combines a zebra print stretch shirt with a hot golden leopard skin draped skirt. Versace prefaced the surprise with the initial dissonance and unexpected forensic combinations. The idea of extremes colliding seems to be a common theme among Versace's clothing.

In the next few dresses, he combines a strong, confident punk look from the lower class streets with the glamorous and decadent formal look of the upper class socialites. Interestingly, like Versace, no one ever ignored the middle class, or as he called them, the bourgeoisie. As a designer and as a human being, Versace never forgot the middle road or the middle class. This may explain why it is the middle class alone that still holds its approval from Versace, often distancing itself from his purported vulgarity and his unabashed embrace of consumption. Nevertheless, the jelling of the spirit of the rich with the indomitable power of the poor is a new and interesting creation. This is the inspiration for the trademark oversize punk safety pins on fancy evening wear, and the combination of rich black with silky shorts, jerseys and leather. In an evening dress made famous by Madonna, Versace merged sweeping second empire silhouettes with the practical stitching and pockets of blue jeans. Perhaps most appealing aspect is that in no way do these seemingly contradictory styles take away from each other, on the contrary, they come together to create a truly unique beauty.

One of the most important characteristics of Versace's evening wear, is that the dress must honor the voluptuous primacy of the body. Clothing, according to Versace, is the celebration of the body and its desires. He accords fashion with desire rather than decorum. This is exemplified by Versace's transfiguration of Chanel's "little black dress" of the 1920's, into what is now known as the famous Elizabeth Hurley dress (a black dress he bought together loosely by large golden pins worn to the premiere of Hugh Grant's film "Four Weddings and a Funeral"). This version, triumphs over all other reincarnations of the Chanel dress, not in decorum, but in desire, bringing glittering metal together with bare flesh. In my opinion, it is a masterpiece of beauty and sensuality. The material drapes so naturally over the body, it seems to take the form of liquid. The dress is alive; it moves and sings. The dress actually worships the body, and by so doing turns the lucky wearer into a goddess.

Versace is also famous for his combination of the extremely provocative and formal wear. Many of his gowns are made of black see-through lace and may have multiple leather straps or outer corsets. Symbols of prostitution and sadomasochism, as well as undergarments, are common themes amongst Versace pieces. Believe it or not, this idea actually has deeper meaning. Modern art found a great ideal in the prostitute. Toulouse-Lautrec (1880's) prized her unlike-ly virtues and ambivalent freedoms. Versace located the prostitute as the last unexamined figure in fashion. He saw her as the symbol for the confident, gender proud, and sexually liberated. No one had taken the prostitute into fashion as Versace did. He seized the streetwalker's bravado and conspicuous wardrobe along with its sexuality and introduced them to fashion. He represented her glamour, as he supplied her with a new suppleness that made the body clinging clothing look more vulnerable and exposed. He hinted at the man who broke the Dream showing the full breadth of Versace's talent. The last section was the men's collection. Versace describes in his book Men without Ties how men can be just as sexual as women are. He insists that the man too is a sex object, thus the style of clothing should make it so. Versace shirts are usually draped or bloused, and accentuate the upper torso. The male wardrobe may have brilliant colors, dashes of lace, or sexy straps. Much to my surprise, the resulting look is very different from the Versace clad female. While Versace's style accentuates a woman's strength and power, the Versace clad man actually looks more vulnerable, and seems more subservient than the regular Chaps-wearing gentleman. This phenomenon might be a ramification of the different roles that sexual expression take on in man and woman. Either way, fashion alone can tell us a lot about the culture of our time.

Recognizing Versace as the first post-Freudian designer, is honoring the truthfulness and utter lack of shame or guilt within him. The moral, religious, or decorous rei nforcement and remorse of other fashion designers, have disappeared in Versace. He accepts sex not merely as a facet of life, but as a celebration of life. The long tradition of fashion's coy expressions of sexuality, alluding as metaphor to sex, is ultimately grounded in the conventions of refinement. By those conventions, Versace is raw and impudent. But Versace, not being a particularly religious man, felt he had no reason to succumb to the taboos and sociological moral pressures. This does not make him right, but it does make him an important innovator and a creative genius. He shall always be remembered in the way he said he wanted to be, as the man who broke the fashion barrier.
As most people every year watch the Academy Awards telecast and try to see if their favorite films, Win, Churchill, or The Godfather, will win, I thought I might try to explain a bit about how things work and give my predictions along the way.

**Voting:** The first thing people need to know is that the voting is not significantly different from the majority of movie awards given by members who are specialists in their respective categories and the winner is chosen by all members of the Academy. This accounts for one major phenomenon: the sweep of a movie. In many cases a movie can take home a handful of awards, some of which it does not deserve. For example, an Academy Award for the British Empire, English Patient. A few years ago, Atonement won for Best Actor, Best Actress, and Best Supporting Actor, among others. The film was not even nominated for Best Picture.

The Oscars: Rules, Predictions, and Commentary

**By Yair Oppenheim**

In the opinion of many, the Oscars are the holy grail of awards season. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is the body that selects the winners, and their decisions are often considered to be the pinnacle of cinematic achievement. The Oscars are a celebration of excellence in the film industry, and they are eagerly anticipated by fans and industry professionals alike. In this article, we will explore the rules of the Oscars, provide predictions for this year's winners, and discuss the commentary surrounding the event.

**Rules and Predictions:***

The Academy Awards, also known as the Oscars, are a set of awards presented annually by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to recognize excellence in cinematic achievements. The awards are given in various categories, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actress, and many others. The winners are determined through a voting process by the members of the Academy, who are specialists in their respective fields. The awards are intended to recognize the best cinematic achievements of the previous year, and they are often seen as a benchmark for excellence in the industry.

**Commentary:**

The Oscars are a significant event in the film industry, and they are often seen as a way to celebrate the best cinematic achievements of the year. However, the process of selecting the winners is often controversial, and there have been many debates and discussions about the fairness and accuracy of the voting process. Some people believe that the Oscars are too commercialized and that the winners are often determined by industry insiders rather than by the general public. Others argue that the Oscars are a valuable way to celebrate and recognize the best cinematic achievements of the year, and that they provide a platform for filmmakers to be recognized for their work.

In conclusion, the Oscars are a significant event in the film industry, and they are often seen as a way to celebrate the best cinematic achievements of the year. While the process of selecting the winners is often controversial, the Oscars provide a valuable platform for filmmakers to be recognized for their work, and they are an important part of the film industry.
Religion Post Zionism

BY BENJAMIN BALINT

One hundred years after the birth of Zionism, and fifty years after the creation of the Jewish State, it seems wholly appropriate that we reflect on and assess the present state of the Zionist dream.

Certainly, the voluntary exit of a renewed Jewish homeland, Israel’s amazing pace of modernization, the stunning accomplishments of its military and industrial prowess, and its arousal of Jewish identity, all promise the fantastic success of Zionism. In the arena of ideas, however, Zionism appears increasingly embattled and even unstable. In the past sixty years, Christian theologians often demonstrate staunch support for Israel than do their liberal American Jewish counterparts, for whom the sixties of the last long since wore off.

The Israeli academic and opinion elite seems characterized by a secularist, self-loathing post-Zionism which sanctifies Jewish disempowerment, equates Zionism with colonialist racism and IDF soldiers with “Judeo-Nazis,” which debunks Zionist heroes, and regards religious Judaism as the corrupt enemy of Israeli democracy. Variations on these themes are perpetuated in much of Israel’s literature (e.g. sometimes evidenced in the fiction of A.B. Yehoshua and Amos Oz), political writing (Shimon Peres’ The New Middle East, denounces “particularist nationalism”), and newspapers (Ma’ariv feels compelled to report that Herzel once had a Christmas tree and was wont to visit the brothels of Vienna). The idealism of the chutzlaim fades further into the oblivion of a no longer inspirational history. We are witness to the collapse of the Jewish nationalism which built the state, and to the emergence of a new ideology which regards Zionism as at best passé (one academic blithely announces that Herzel “doesn’t speak to us anymore”), and at worst evil.

The Israeli secular right, such as it is, suffers meanwhile from a general intellectual anemia, and religious Zionism, “whose standard of achievement is an additional house built, an additional Jew moved out to the settlements,” as Yoram Hazony puts it, does not fare much better in articulating a convincing and relevant vision. Settlers are perceived in an editorial in Ha’aretz as “command no real presence in the cultural mainstream,” they seem both culturally and intellectually marginalized, and religious Zionism, when it is not pontificating on theological abstractions or engaged in synagoguespeak babbling, proves its woeful impotence in affecting general public opinion.

We might well imagine Nietzsche’s madman running through the streets of Jerusalem yelling: “Where is Zionism? Where has it gone? We have killed it! Do you not smell its putrefying corpse? For even ideologies utterly, you know! What are Israel’s cultural centers if not the tomb of Zionism?” What accounts for such disintegration? I don’t know. Perhaps it is due to the brazen confidence of a Leon Wieseltier, for example, who on the pages of the New Republic declares Israel to be “fundamentally inextricable.” But why should the source, the effect be perversely a nation’s strength depends not so much on the size of its army as on its inner unity, on the vibrancy and virility of its national return d’Erez, on the depth of its historical consciousness, and on the degree to which it preserves its heritage and texts. Ideological disintegration, an absence of positive ideals, threatens the Jewish State far more powerfully than material or military weakness.

The critical void, the ideological emptiness that appears so indigenous to today’s Israeli political and cultural geography calls for a new idea capable of replacing Israeli ennui with a fresh sense of meaningful purpose. This idea, what may be called religious post-Zionism, affirms the fundamental applicability and relevance of Torah to all issues of the modern state. Not content with an escape into eschato-spectacular speculation, nor satisfied to proclaim itself in prayers but not in action, this Zionism of the future represents not a departure from tradition, but a return to the Halachic dynamism and ambition of the pre-exilic tradition.

Religious post-Zionism declares that Israel is holy and the beginning of redemption, because it demands our national initiative and responsibility, because it challenges us to concretely implement Halacha as a total way of life on every level, and because it shows, in the words of R. Aharon Lichtenstein, to become “maximally Jewish.” It is holy because it demands that Halacha not only draw into a separate, autonomous “holy sphere,” that it acquire a kind of this-worldly, messianic quality. Israel is holy, in short, because it confronts us with a daunting challenge: To coax our biblical and talmudic texts to speak to and genuinely address the modern society of our own making.

As Emmanuel Levinas writes, “The thing that is special about the State of Israel is not that it fulfills an ancient promise, or heralds a new age of material security, but that it finally offers the opportunity to carry out the social law of Judaism.” Through Israel, we may put an end to the uniquely horrible predicament of the galut; namely, that Jews were the only people to simultaneously define itself by a doctrine of social justice, and yet be totally incapable of applying it.

Religious post-Zionism announces that Israel should be not primarily the attainment of abstract independence, not an answer to the Holocaust, not a refuge from persecution, and not a guard against assimilation, but rather the fullest realization of Torah; an actualization which widens the range of Halacha, thus intensifying the ways in which God can be made present in daily communal and national life. The fullest realization of Torah is enabled not by freedom from the burdens of daily existence, but precisely by the shuddering of these very burdens of shared responsibility for the fate of the nation; by participating and engaging in the mundane functioning of our own society. This is how I understand the Talmudic lesson (Chaggiga 5b) that “since Israel was exiled from its place there is no greater negation of Torah than this.”

If, after an eventful one hundred-year lifetime, Zionism has died, its ideological progeny and spiritual heirs should eulogize it in gratitude, should build on the foundations it has with great toil laid, and should surpass it in restoring Jewish national purpose.
To the Editor:
Tuviyah Breier wrote a letter in the last issue of the Commentator stating that people who give mussar to smokers are most likely giving it for the wrong reasons and should stop.

I would like to address Mr. Breier's three categories of supposedly misguided mussar-givers. He claims that the first group are those who believe that using "positive peer pressure" to convince smokers to end their addiction. He states that he has never met a smoker who quit in order to end torment at the hands of his peers. I agree wholeheartedly. However, I continue to encourage my friends to stop smoking. How can I do such a thing? Am I relieving stress at the expense of my friends? No. I believe that even though my encouragement will not be the reason that my friends quit, it may in some small way help push them to overcome their laziness. All I hear from them is "I know I should quit, maybe next month." The goal of this mussar is not to inform the smoker of the issue of smoking, rather to try and motivate said smoker to action.

Mr. Breier also mentions that he, "would like to see the genuinely concerned..." He concludes that Mr. Breier's mistake is in the idea of mussar. Many do things that they know are bad; they are simply too lazy to change or to care. The mussar giver is not always to inform but to motivate. Mussar is to encourage one to live in to the thought, there is no hope, why bother; but instead to take the first step towards positive change.

I think Mr. Breier perceives evil that exists perhaps only in his imagination. Those who warn him about the dangers of smoking may actually be concerned for his health. His perception of a societal "attack on smokers" is a condemnation of the action, not the person.

Only through condemning the action can we be sure that others won't fall in to the unfortunate pit Mr. Breier and many others have stumbled into. Such a condemnation of smoking may not help, but it is certainly in contributing to the death of this deadly habit for future generations.

Clearly I can not understand the exact nature of an addiction to smoking. I certainly agree that mussar should be given with the realization that "you haven't walked a mile in his shoes," and the proper tact. However, to stop giving mussar completely as you suggest is purely folly. If we do not try to help each other who will help us? So, while I appreciate your advice that I will be wasting my breath, I will continue to "waste my breath" in the hope that I can save someone else's.

Maury Grebenau YC '00

Second-hand Mussar

In Dire Need of Repair

To the Editor:
Ah, the joys the end of a semester can bring: finals almost over, looking forward to a three-week break. However, just when you think it's time to kick back, you are reminded of that one traumatic event we must all suffer through - registration, a frustrating process no YU student anticipates.

Students in colleges in the United States, the registration process is fairly simple. The student picks his courses, has them reviewed by an academic advisor (one who specializes in his major, I might add!) and then registers either by phone or the internet; either way, the actual registration process takes mere minutes. But here at Yeshiva University we like to do things differently. Instead of taking advantage of the vast computer technology so readily available in today's society, we must register in person. Students obtain an "appointment time," are herded into a packed line like cattle, and poked with sharp rods of verbal sarcasm from every direction. There, we must wait for at least an hour regardless of our "scheduled" appointment. In most cases, by the time we are actually honored with admission into the holy registration room, half of the courses are closed and we are forced to repeat this dreadful process once more.

The last I checked, the year is 1998. Yeshiva University could set up a registration line where students can dial up, enter their social security number, and register on the phone by punching in course numbers. Similarly, YU could dedicate a website for registration using the same concept. There is absolutely no reason for us to wait in line for what seems like an eternity only to have someone else enter our data into a computer; we should be able to do so ourselves and avoid the wasted hours. Certainly this would also save the staff much time (and an attack of hypertension) as well.

Meanwhile, if students must be subjected to this extremely demoralizing process again, I do suggest that YU give out tranquilizer pills at the registration line, and please be sure that the registration staff are administered as well.

Aaron Klein
YC, IBC '00

Unwarranted Criticism

To the Editor:
I recently had the opportunity to read Adam Moses' editorial opinion in the 7 Shevat 5758 issue of the Commentator. Let me preface my remarks by saying that I do not agree with Rabbi Svei, and as you can well imagine I see the matters which he has raised as little hypocrisy which lie inside me after reading your piece. If some of the emotions sneak in, I ask you forgiveness in advance. I must begin by saying that I do not believe you have personally heard or read a transcript of Rabbi Svei's speech. You write that, "Rabbi Svei was reacting to the infamous "caveman" remark when I finished your article. I imagine that your commentary is based on the ironic is it, that while your editorial is

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Where are All the Fans?

BY MECHA POLAT

The Yeshiva University Macs, with a record of 15 wins and 8 losses are experiencing a successful season. Their games have been extremely exciting as they have an interesting mix of talented veterans and promising younger classmates. The team has been improving game by game as they are getting used to playing in high-pressure situations including recent victories against high-flying opponents such as Polytechnic and Lehman Universities. One might even use the word dramatic to describe these most recent victories as one players have stepped up for the team in clutch fashion to come up with the big buckets down the stretch.

All these facts bring up one disturbing and obvious question. Why is the Max Stern Athletic center practically empty when the basketball team plays? In addition, is there a reason why I’m able to have a conversation with my friend from one side of the court to the other without any vocal disturbances during a basketball game? Perhaps Yeshiva University students lack school spirit or maybe they just don’t care about their basketball team and this is a major problem.

The Macabees have a better record on the road, nine and three, then they do on their own home court, six and five. Our team needs our support. The fans are the people who really motivate the team to play the ir hearts out and to give it all we got.”

It is a commonly known phrase that if a basketball team has excellent fan support, the actual people attending the game are considered a sixth man. One opposing player who asked to remain nameless stated, “I love playing in Yeshiva because I don’t have to deal with the loud crowds that I’m normally used to in away games, especially when it comes to free throws.” This quote in itself is proof enough that your support makes a difference.

In finding the root of the problem, though, one must know what is going through the heads of the Yeshiva students who don’t bother to attend these games. When YC sophomore Seth Goldberger was asked why he hasn’t attended any of the basketball games as of yet, he said, “Well because they suck and they’re boring to watch.” Now this is an inaccurate opinion of basketball because there are many factors that influence a man’s decision whether or not to watch a basketball game. In this case, the Macabees have a better record on the road, nine and three, then they do on their own home court, six and five. Nevertheless, Assistant Coach Pete Rosas was impressed with the YU performance. “St. Johns is ranked #2 in the country,” Coach Rosas said, “and most of those guys were fencing against high flying opponents such as New York University. Now where else are you going to see a Canadian do that?”

The losses to St. Johns and Princeton do not count for the conference standings of Yeshiva University. Yeshiva is in the MACPA conference. The conference championship will be held on March 1. After a long season, in which Yeshiva fenced many first class teams outside their conference, Yeshiva seeks success in their conference championship.

Fencers Looking Forward to Championship

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

The fencers representing YU have been on a wild, exhilarating run. Over the past few weeks, the swordsmen have traveled to duel in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and in the remote and distant borough of Queens.

After a trip to Boston, where Yeshiva fenced Rutgers, Boston College, MIT, Brandeis, and Brown, Yeshiva went to southern Pennsylvania to fence Lafayette College and Haverford College. At this meet, the Yeshiva fencers exhibited their gallant, intrepid, and merciless nature. Yeshiva crushed the fencers of Lafayette, winning by a score of 20-7. Freshman fencer Ami Small had a tremendous day, as he accumulated two victories. Overall, the sabre squad went 8-1, while the epee and foil squads combined to win 12. Following the tremendous victory over Lafayette, Yeshiva failed to gain glory against Haverford, losing a tightly contested match.

The Yeshiva musketeers’ next match, however, was not so close. Perhaps tired after a long trip to Astoria, Queens, or perhaps—more likely—overwhelmed by superior fencers, Yeshiva lost to St. Johns.

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Intramurals Update

BY MARK HECHT

1. Bulls 51 Trotters 46
   This game featured a possible preview of this semester’s championship game. These two teams played a hard fought, high intensity game. At the end, the underdog Bulls were able to contain the outside threat of the Trotters. Bulls were led by David Wild who contributed sixteen points. The Trotters were led by Akiva Sausen with thirteen points.

2. Canes 60 Heat 38
   From the start this game was a blowout. The Heat fell down early and were never able to resuscitate themselves. The Canes seem to have made a tremendous turn around from last season, and may be a force to be reckoned with come playoff time.

This Week’s Top Picks

1. Bulls - This fab five has all the tools necessary to win the championship.
2. Liberty - Koenigsburg pulled out a gut wrenching victory. Koenigsburg collected his 41st point and the game stopped to award him the Red Scarf achievement award for sportsmanship.
3. Liberty 45 Team #1 44
   In a game that came down to the wire, the Liberty pulled out a gut wrenching victory. Koenigsburg collected his 41st point and the game stopped to award him the Red Scarf achievement award for sportsmanship.

4. Canes - This team has great chemistry and a lot of heart.
5. Team #1 - They should change their team name.
6. Yankees - Stop fortifying!
7. Lakers - They need another time slot.
8. T’Wolves - Goldwicht needs to learn to stop shooting the three.