Rishon Le’Zion, Hakham Shlomo Amar Visits Yeshiva University

Rabbi Amar delivers shiur to RIETS students, meets with roshei yeshiva and Sephardic rabbinic faculty

Hakham Shlomo Amar, the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, recently visited the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), an affiliate of Yeshiva University, on Dec. 9, the last day of Hanukkah. The Chief Rabbi, also known as the Rishon Le’Zion, was greeted upon his arrival by Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, President Richard M. Joel, Rabbi Dr. Herbert C. Dobrinsky and Rabbi Yona Reiss, as well as by the Sephardic rabbinic faculty including Rabbi Eliyahu Ben-Haim, Rabbi Elie Abadie, MD and Rabbi Moshe Tessone, among others. Rav Amar delivered a shiur [Torah lecture] to RIETS students and later met with various roshei yeshiva and members of the YU faculty and administration, and held a private question-and-answer-session with members of the RIETS Kollel Elyon.

“Chief Rabbi Amar is a towering personality in the world Jewish community and an outstanding Torah scholar,” said Rabbi Reiss, the Max and Marion Grill Dean of RIETS. “We are privileged to have this opportunity to solidify our strong relationship with the Chief Rabbinate and to work together earnestly for the benefit of Klal Yisrael, both in the Diaspora and in Eretz Yisrael.”

While students and rabbis packed the beit midrash [study hall] in YU’s Glueck Center for Jewish Studies to hear Rabbi Amar’s shiur on Hanukkah, the day held added significance for the hundreds of Sephardic students on the YU campus, who greeted the Hakham with the traditional pizmon [Sephardic chant] reserved for entry of a Torah luminary, Yahid El Dagool Mirvava.

“It’s a great honor to have the Chief Rabbi visit YU and to have the opportunity to meet and ask him questions,” said Rabbi Yosef Chaim Yanetz, a RIETS shoel u’meishiv [Talmudic mentor] and a student at YU’s Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies.

“We are very proud that YU has invited Chief Rabbi Amar,” added Yosef Sharbat ’09 YC, a RIETS student who is pursuing semikha and is currently enrolled at YU’s Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. “As a Sephardic student it means a lot to have this great rabbi here.”

Rabbi Amar and Chancellor Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm.
More than 600 students from Yeshiva University’s undergraduate schools were presented with their degrees at YU’s 79th commencement exercises at The Theater at Madison Square Garden on Wednesday, May 26, 2010.

Among the graduates, nine were selected for special distinction as valedictorians for their exceptional academic achievements.

From the group of nine valedictorians, three were notable Sephardic students who excelled in their respective areas of study. Included in this select group were: Isaac Kuyunov, of the James Striar School of Jewish General Studies; Jonathan Solaimanzadeh, of the Isaac Breuer College of Hebraic Studies; and Avi Harari, of the Yeshiva Program/Mazer School of Talmudic Studies.

Rabbi Yona Reiss, the Max and Marion Grill Dean of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, expressed pride in the graduates. “We are very proud of our many excellent students graduating from the Mazer Yeshiva Program, including the valedictorian, Avi Harari, who is a most worthy recipient of this honor in addition to being a stellar member of the Masmidim Honors program.”

Indeed, this remarkable accomplishment is reflective of the outstanding academic achievements of the Sephardic students at YU, who continue to become a more integral and vibrant part of the general undergraduate population on both the men’s and women’s campuses, as well as in the YU graduate schools.

Yeshiva University’s 2010 valedictorians L–R: Aryeh Green, Jonathan Solaimanzadeh, Isaac Kuyunov, Willie Roth, David Weiss, Avi Harari, Fay Burekhovich and Gail Klinger. (Chaim Safir is not pictured.)

Three Sephardic YU Graduates Recognized for their Academic Achievements

Avi Harari, valedictorian
Jonathan Solaimanzadeh
Fay Burekhovich and Avi Harari

Jonathan Solaimanzadeh, valedictorian

YU Education and Inspiration in Brazil

At the invitation of Brazil’s local Jewish community, seven Yeshiva University (YU) students traveled to Sao Paulo, Brazil over their Sukkot vacation as part of the Center for the Jewish Future’s (CJF) first-ever Counterpoint Brazil program, at Colegio Iavne, a Jewish day school in Sao Paulo. During this trip they also visited the Beit Yaacov School, named for the late Jacob E. Safra. The Beit Yaacov School plans on sending a group of its students to visit YU in the coming year.

Over the course of two weeks—Sept. 19 through Oct. 2—the Counterpoint team conducted interactive and stimulating Jewish identity seminars and ran a state-of-the-art experiential Jewish educational program, Camp Otzmah [strength], for local high school students. The camp’s specially-designed curriculum included engaging breakout sessions on a variety of topics, Torah learning and workshops involving the arts, music and sports.

“This program was a milestone for our community,” said Rabbi Shmuel Paves, principal of Jewish studies at Colegio Iavne. “I wanted our students to meet young people who are proud and committed to their Jewish identity and, at the same time, people who are graduating and will engage in the secular world with the spiritual strength of Torah study and values.”

“This was a unique opportunity for our students to project Yeshiva’s educational mission abroad and to establish relationships and inspire youth and educators in South America,” explained Rabbi Moshe Tessone, director of YU’s Sephardic Community Program. “The students who travelled on this mission to Brazil truly represented YU’s ideals and philosophy and had the opportunity through mentoring to impact many youngsters in a very positive and lasting way.”
Every four years, the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) celebrates the young men who have accepted the calling of the rabbinate and mastered the scholarship necessary to receive rabbinic ordination. We proudly salute our new musmakhim [rabbinic graduates] as they join the more than 3,000 RIETS rabbis, thousands of whom are serving in pulpits, schools, hospitals, outreach positions and Jewish organizations in America, Israel and beyond. We wish them continued success and growth in their holy endeavors and continually welcome them back to RIETS—their spiritual home—for continuing education, inspiration and contact with their mentors and rabbinic colleagues.

This year, we honored a record high number of some 200 musmakhim of the classes of 5766–5770 (2006–2010). From the group of musmakhim receiving ordination there were 13 men who are from the Sephardic community. This represents the largest-ever number of Sephardic rabbis to be ordained at the University in a four-year period.

Two special RIETS alumni were the honorees at this momentous event. One was Rabbi Dr. Herbert C. Dobrinsky, vice president for University Affairs and co-founder of the Sephardic Studies Program at YU, who received the Harav Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik (z’t”l) Aluf Torah Award. Dr. Dobrinsky’s fellow graduate of the mid-1980’s, Rabbi Marvin Bienenfeld, received the prestigious Eitz Hayim Award.

In 1964, Dr. Dobrinsky, with the leadership of then University President Dr. Samuel Belkin z”l and The Hakham Rabbi Dr. Solomon Gaon z”l, and with the support of Ivan Salomon a”h, established the Sephardic Programs at YU. These men’s vision has played a vital role in educating our Sephardic youth and nurturing their communities’ growth by assisting them to build properly-run Synagogues and educational institutions. Today, that vision has yielded tremendous results and has won the respect and admiration of Jewish religious and lay leaders and of countless Sephardim around the world. Indeed, the Sephardic communities of America are indebted to Dr. Dobrinsky, whose tireless efforts on behalf of Sephardic education and communal leadership continue.

Dr. Dobrinsky’s doctoral research was in Sephardic minhagim [customs] and Halakah, and was published originally in 1986, and then again in 1988 and 2001 under the title A Treasury of Sephardic Laws and Customs. This monumental work has become one of the most authoritative household reference volumes for Sephardic minhagim and is used by educators at the high school and college level as a textbook and learning guide. The Sephardic Community Program at YU still benefits from the leadership of Dr. Dobrinsky, who founded the program and who, among his many duties at the University, serves as the program’s special consultant and is integrally involved in its daily operations.
Rabbi Lawrence Hajioff
Teaching at Stern

Rabbi Lawrence Hajioff is one of the most dynamic teachers at Yeshiva University’s Stern College for Women, where quite often his classes fill up as soon as they become available.

Originally from London, Rabbi Hajioff attended the Hasmonean Yeshiva High School, after which he went for a year of study in Israel. This pre-college year coincided with the first Gulf War, and Rabbi Hajioff spent much of his time helping Israeli civilians around the country who were displaced and affected by the war. Upon his return to England, he attended Manchester University, where he was very involved in Jewish life on campus, running events, and practicing his stand-up comedy routines on the side. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in political science.

After a brief stint working as a television news producer at MTV and European Business News, Rabbi Hajioff decided to return to full-time learning. He studied at Ohr Samayach in Jerusalem and then in Monsey, NY for five years where he received semikha. Upon completing his yeshiva learning, he began working in Manhattan for the Jewish Enrichment Center. He currently works for Birthright Israel Next as their official rabbi in New York, running classes and leading trips to Israel and Europe for hundreds of young professionals.

Rabbi Hajioff joined YU’s Stern College for Women faculty six years ago as part of the Mechina program, teaching students who in many cases did not have a traditional Jewish day school background, or who did not have the chance to study for a year in Israel.

His courses include: “An Introduction to Judaism,” which outlines the major precepts of Torah; “The Holidays,” which reviews Jewish festivals, hashkafa [perspective] and Halakha; and “Shabbat,” which covers the concepts and melakhot [categories of prohibited activity] related to Shabbat.

Many of Rabbi Hajioff’s students come from different corners of the world including Panama, Colombia, Israel, France and Chile. As a result of his Persian background, Rabbi Hajioff is able to reach out to the many Sephardic students who attend his classes, teaching them the many minhagim [customs] and halakhot of their particular communities. Rabbi Hajioff currently lives in Monsey with his wife, Anita, and their five children.

Lecture Series on Sephardic Jewry a Big Success

One of Yeshiva University’s greatest treasures, arguably, is its renowned Jewish studies department. Together with the Bernard Revel Graduate School for Jewish Studies, it truly enriches University studies with subjects dear to the many students who are interested in their history as Jews.

Recently two professors, Dr. Ronnie Perelis and Dr. Daniel Tsadik, specializing in Judeo-Spanish and Judeo-Persian Sephardic History respectively, have joined the YU faculty, teaching a variety of interesting courses in their areas of expertise. One of their students, Daniel Sultan, was so inspired by these courses that he undertook, with the guidance and encouragement of Rabbi Moshe Tessone, to organize a series of two back-to-back extracurricular interactive lectures, both of which were major successes on the YU campuses.

These lectures were inspiring and very well attended, giving students and staff the opportunity to learn more about Babylonian and Persian Jewry and the Golden Age of Spain, and the ways in which these historic episodes shaped and influenced Jews across the globe then, as well as today.

Both presentations helped students gain a deeper understanding of the development of Judaism and the many struggles Jews endured while living under Christian and Islamic rule.

Revel Hosts Scholar

Norman Stillman, authority on Sephardic history, meets with Revel students and faculty, and lectures at YU

The Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies hosted Norman Stillman, an internationally recognized authority on the history and culture of the Islamic world and on Sephardi and Oriental Jewry, on Wednesday, Nov. 3, 2010. Stillman is the Schusterman/Josey Chair in Judaic History at the University of Oklahoma and has authored seven books and numerous articles in several languages.

As part of his visit to Yeshiva University, Stillman met with Revel doctoral students at a special luncheon. There, he spoke about “The Path to a Life Studying the Jews of the Islamic World: Studying under Shlomo Dov Goitein.”

The day also included a dinner discussion with Revel faculty members on “Why Did We Need Another Reference Work? The Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World” and a public lecture on “Moroccan Jewry in Modern Times: Orientations and Reorientations.”

“Professor Stillman not only provided the intellectual stimulation that comes with the presence of a distinguished scholar, he conveyed to our doctoral students the experience of working with Shelomo Dov Goitein, one of the most significant Jewish scholars of the 20th century,” said Dr. David Berger, dean and Ruth and I. Lewis Gordon Professor of Jewish History at Revel. “His presence also underscored the fact that with the recent hires of Professor Daniel Tsadik, an expert in the field of Iranian Jewry and in Jews in the Arabic-speaking Islamic world, and of Professor Ronnie Perelis, an expert in the field of Sephardic Jewry in the Christian world, Revel now has one of the strongest programs in Sephardic history in the United States.”

Dr. Norman Stillman with select Sephardic students at YU graduate program.
During the summer of 2010, a select group of Yeshiva University (YU) Honors students combined coursework and travel as part of a unique educational experience. The month-long program covering the history of Sephardic Jews in medieval Spain combined two weeks in the classroom and two weeks of travel. The travel portion included many on-site learning experiences at historic locations throughout the south of Spain and in the capital city of Madrid. Some students also took a Spanish language course during the same summer session.

The courses were taught by Dr. Ronnie Perelis, who is the Chief Rabbi Dr. Isaac Abraham and Jelena (Rachel) Alcalay Chair in Sephardic Studies at YU. Dr. Perelis also led the tours in Spain, in cooperation with Dr. Gabriel Cwilich, a noted professor of physics and director of the Yeshiva College Honors Program. Rabbi Moshe Tessone, director of the YU’s Sephardic Community Program, accompanied the group and led the visits and programs that were held in conjunction with the local Sephardic community of Madrid.

During their Shabbat in Madrid, the students participated in services and a communal Shabbat meal with the local Jewish youth, also meeting the community’s spiritual leader, Rabbi Moshe Bendahan. Rabbi Tessone and several of the students presented insightful divrei Torah to the community at several of the Shabbat meals, and projected the ideal of youth who engage in Torah Umadda, YU’s unique mission of combining Jewish and secular studies.

The highlight of the trip included a three-day tour of the historic cities of Cordoba, Grenada and Seville, where Dr. Cwilich guided the group through the Jewish quarters of each of these cities as well as other important sites that date back to medieval times.
Sephardic Club Leadership Shabbaton in Brooklyn Sephardic Community

By Albert Pinhasov

At the recent Sephardic Shabbaton in Brooklyn, the atmosphere was warm and welcoming, the Shabbat spirit filled the air, the food was delicious and community rabbis and students gave many inspiring divrei Torah [words of Torah] and sang traditional pizmonim [Sephardic chants]. It was a very exciting, uplifting and memorable Shabbat Hanukkah in the Syrian-Sephardic community. Led by Yeshiva University’s own Rabbi Moshe Tessone and his wife, nearly 30 YU men and women experienced Shabbat in Brooklyn while experiencing four different synagogues within the Syrian community.

Friday night began with Minha services and Kabbalat Shabbat at Beth El Congregation. Immediately after the prayers, Rabbi Tessone opened the Shabbaton with welcoming words and asked participants to tell a little bit about the origins and customs of their community, as well as their career and leadership aspirations. The evening proceeded with a Friday night seudah [meal] and divrei Torah on the weekly parsha offered by Rabbi Tessone. Following the meal the students walked to the Sephardic Lebanese congregation, where they concluded their night program with a thought-provoking class on the topic of Hanukkah presented by Rabbi Avraham Benhamu SSSB ’93, R ’95.

Shabbat Shaharit and breakfast kiddush took place at Congregation B’nai Yitzhak, where words of Torah were presented by Rabbi Isaac Tawil YC ’06, followed by a lunch at Rabbi and Mrs. Tessone’s home.

After seudah shelishit, the women read Tehillim with Rabanit Tessone, while the men prayed Minha and Arvit services at Shaarei Zion Congregation, known to be the mother synagogue of Brooklyn’s Syrian community.

The evening was concluded at Rabbi Tessone’s home with a beautiful havdalah ceremony, accompanied by music and singing.

On behalf of all the participants we would like to thank the YU Sephardic Club leaders and Rabbi Tessone and his family, and all the members of the Syrian community who opened their homes and warmly hosted students as Friday-night guests. May we merit experiencing many more inspiring and culturally enriching Shabbatonim in the very near future.

Institute for University Partnership Helps Syrian Community

The Syrian Sephardic communities of Brooklyn and Deal, NJ, have a long history of unmatched communal participation in Jewish day-school education. As a result, their communities support some of the largest day schools in North America, including two with enrollments exceeding 2,000 students.

Because of the communities’ high level of participation in the funding of day schools, the financial pressures caused by the current recession have hit the Sephardic community particularly hard. As a result, dedicated professionals and lay leaders are aggressively seeking solutions to strengthen school finances and provide needed financial support to families.

As part of their attempt to find solutions, members of the Sephardic community reached out to Harry Bloom, director of planning and performance improvement at Yeshiva University’s Institute for University-School Partnership (IUSP), asking for YU’s assistance in applying some of its programming to the needs of Sephardic day schools. As a result, IUSP, in conjunction with YU’s Sephardic Community Program (SCP) have agreed to share YU’s expertise and experience in helping schools improve their financial management through state-of-the-art comparative financial benchmarking programs.

Bloom, along with Rabbi Moshe Tessone, director of the SCP, Dr. Herbert Dobrinsky, vice president for University affairs and Dr. David Schnall, dean of the Azrieli Graduate School for Jewish Education and Administration, came together with a group of young professionals with backgrounds in finance, law and accounting. The group discussed innovative ideas to improve the ability of young families to save money for tuition, for Sephardic day schools to determine financial aid needs, and for the schools to strengthen their ability to generate revenue and reduce expenses. The meeting took place under the leadership of Daniel Harari and David Cohen.

Some months later, Bloom and Rabbi Tessone presented the details of the meeting to some 40 community leaders convened by Albert Laboz, director of the Sephardic Community Alliance, at the Sephardic Community Center on Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn.

After an engaging presentation and a great deal of active discussion about how to apply YU’s benchmarking toolkit (which has been helpful to other communities who face similar challenges), Laboz indicated that the session was “very, very worthwhile, stimulating and eye-opening.”

YU and members of the Sephardic community are actively considering how they can collaborate to capitalize on the positive impact of this meeting, possibly in conjunction with the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education, which the IUSP actively collaborates with to support day schools.
YU Conference Examines Israel and Iran’s Long History

Recently, a group of renowned scholars led by Dr. Daniel Tsadik convened at Yeshiva University for a one-day conference. The conference was held on Sunday, October 31, 2010 at the Yeshiva University Museum and was sponsored by the YU Center for Israel Studies and the Rabbi Arthur Schneier Center for International Relations, and co-sponsored by the Yeshiva University Museum, YU’s Sephardic Community Program and YU’s Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies (BRGS).

The scholars participating in the conference include Yaakov Elman, professor of Judaic studies at BRGS; Judith Goldstein, professor of anthropology at Vassar College; Aaron Koller, assistant professor of Bible at Yeshiva College; Mahnaz Moazzami, associate research scholar at Columbia University; Evan Resnick, assistant professor of political science at Yeshiva College; Barry Rubin, professor at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, Israel; Daniel Tsadik, associate professor of Sephardic and Iranian Studies at BRGS; and Dalia Yashar-Poor, professor at Harvard University.

YU Hosts Renowned Scholars presenting on “Israel and Iran: From Cyrus the Great to the Islamic Republic”.

1. Dr. Houman Sarshar
2. Herbert Dobrinsky, Steven Fine, Hayim Tawil, Daniel Tsadik, David Berger, Moshe Tessone
3. Daniel Tsadik, Hayim Tawil, Steven Fine
4. Rabbi Arthur Schneier and Ruth Bevan Dunner
5. Yaakov Elman
6. Hayim Tawil
Our Students And The Sephardic Community

1. Dr. Heskel Haddad and Rabbi Moshe Tessone with students from Halakha class.
2. Rabbi Joseph Esses (YC ’00, RIETS ’04) and his students from Magen David Yeshivah in the Syrian Community.
3. Rabbi Meir Goldwicht giving his weekly-inspirational drasha following Arbit in the Sephardic Beit Midrash at YU.
4. Rabbi Eliyahu Ben-Haim, Sephardic Rosh Yeshiva at YU.
5. Arash Melamed, Herbert Dobrinsky, Kamran Emanuel.
6. Dr. Herbert Dobrinsky, President Richard M. Joel, David Eshaghian, and Rabbi Tessone.
This past fall semester a group of nearly 2 dozen Syrian-Sephardic leaders from 5 leading Sephardic yeshivot in Mexico City led by Abdo Chacalo and Rafael Harari visited YU and had the opportunity to meet President Richard M. Joel, deans and directors at Yeshiva. These distinguished visitors were comprised of key educators and lay leadership from the Syrian community of Mexico City and were accompanied on their visit by Richard Altabe of Magen David Yeshiva in Brooklyn, NY. They toured the YU campuses and also had the opportunity to meet with Rabbi Eliyahu Ben Haim, Rabbi Elie Abadie, Dr Herbert Dobrinsky and Rabbi Moshe Tessone to discuss Jewish educational initiatives in their community.
In Memoriam of our great Sephardic Rabbinic Leaders

Harav Hagaon Mordechai Eliyahu a"h

During the past year, the Jewish Community worldwide suffered the loss of one of the great leaders of our generation, Hakham Mordekhai Eliyahu a"h.

Hakham Mordekhai Eliyahu a"h was born in the old city of Jerusalem in 1929. His father was the Iraqi-born Mekubal Hakham Suleiman Eliyahu a"h.

From a young age, Hakham Eliyahu demonstrated a commitment to Torah and to the Land of Israel. He learned under the prominent Syrian-born Rabbi Ezra Attia a"h, Rosh Yeshiva of Porat Yosef, and soon became the youngest person in Israel to ever hold the post of dayan [judge]. Hakham Eliyahu strove to provide the public a better understanding of Judaism and the Torah, and the countless testimonials about him from people of all walks of life attest to his success in this area. He served in an official role as Rishon Le'Zion, Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Israel, from 1983 to 1993 and authored several popular and authoritative books on Halakha.

The Yeshiva University community was privileged to welcome Hakham Eliyahu to our main campus and beit midrash in February of 2001. Among the many rabbanim who welcomed Hakham Eliyahu was YU’s Sephardic Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Eliyahu Ben-Haim, Vice President for University Affairs, Dr. Herbert C. Dobrinsky, and the Director of Sephardic Community Programs, Rabbi Moshe Tessone.

Hakham Eliyahu expressed his admiration for the distinguished roshei yeshiva in attendance and delivered a shiur klali [general class] in Lamport Auditorium to a full audience of YU students and rabbinic faculty. The YU student body and faculty enthusiastically took advantage of the opportunity to perform the mitzvah of “kabalat p’nei Hakham” honoring and welcoming an illustrious Torah scholar and a towering Jewish figure of our generation.
Dr. Frenkel Visits Barkai Yeshivah

Hoping to make its Earth Day Awareness Program exciting and relevant, Barkai Yeshivah administrators invited Dr. Anatoly Frenkel, head of Yeshiva University’s physics department, to make a presentation to the school’s sixth, seventh and eighth graders.

Dr. Frenkel has been conducting research on fuel cell energy for many years—a fuel cell is an electrochemical cell that converts energy from a fuel into electrical energy, and can be a cleaner form of energy. Dr. Frenkel’s presentation focused on alternative sources of energy from a scientific perspective, and he demonstrated how critical his research is and how people must start to look for and use alternative sources of energy. Following a fascinating and informative slideshow lecture, Dr. Frenkel and his assistant showed the students what a real fuel cell looks like. The students were in awe, especially when they each got a turn to experiment with the fuel cell themselves, even questioning the environmental benefits and the practical applications of alternate energy sources.

Dr. Frenkel’s visit seemed to have a strong impact on the students, in that they were able to see and experience science as it is applied outside the classroom. They also learned the importance of research and realized how it affects their lives. The entire visit was a great success, and Barkai hopes to continue bringing similar scientists to its classes.

Special thanks to Michael Hidary for arranging this progressive program and to Stephanie Krauss, the middle school science teacher at Barkai Yeshivah.

Hayim Tawil’s Book Sheds Light on Biblical Hebrew by Way of Akkadian Language

A new lexicon by Dr. Hayim Tawil, associate professor in Hebrew languages and literature at Yeshiva College (YC), is expected to lead to a more precise and accurate understanding of the Bible and its language.

An Akkadian Lexical Companion for Biblical Hebrew is the “greatest contribution to biblical study published in the past 100 years,” said Dr. Richard White, a lecturer of Semitic languages at YC. “Professor Tawil’s lexicon allows certain expressions in Tanakh to be elucidated by their parallels in Akkadian literature,” Dr. White explained. “[It] provides a connection between the text of the Bible and the world in which the Bible grew up.”

Dr. Tawil said that the lexicon, which came out recently from Ktav Publishing, is the first to provide a comparison and study of word relationships between biblical Hebrew, Akkadian and Aramaic, and will establish “a more precise and accurate meaning of words and idioms,” he said. More nuanced meanings are possible in Akkadian, which has a vocabulary of 50,000 words compared to biblical Hebrew’s 8,000, he explained, “so imagine what light Akkadian can shed on biblical Hebrew?”

A prolific writer, Dr. Tawil has a second book that was recently published with co-author Dr. Bernard Schneider. And while there are scholarly elements to Crown of Aleppo: The Mystery of the Oldest Hebrew Bible Codex, it reads like a thriller. The book considers the volatile history of the Codex or “Crown” of Aleppo, a Bible manuscript written in about 930 C.E. and considered by scholars to be the most authentic version now in existence.

Preserved by Jewish communities in Jerusalem, Tiberias and Cairo, the Crown found a home in the 15th century in the Great Synagogue of Aleppo, Syria where it was housed for almost five centuries. When riots broke out in Syria in 1947, it was thought destroyed, but a significant part of it resurfaced in 1958 and was smuggled with the help of then President Yitzchak Ben-Zvi to Israel, where it is housed at the Israel Museum under the custodianship of the Ben-Zvi Institute.

About a third of the Crown is still missing, although portions of it continue to be rediscovered (most recently last year, when a fragment turned up in the wallet of a survivor of the Aleppo riots).

Dr. Tawil said he and Schneider wrote the book in the hopes of stirring interest in finding the missing pages. Scholars say it may well help. “Their book is an important contribution toward bringing the story of the Aleppo Codex to the attention of a wide audience,” said Michael Glazer, academic secretary at the Ben-Zvi Institute. “Finding the missing pages is an effort that deserves the greatest attention.”

Dr. Tawil, who has been teaching at YU since 1988, was chosen by students as Professor of the Year in 2003 and 2005. The professor is working on a thematic commentary on Shir haShirim [the Song of Songs] and completing work on a novel about the founding of the Jewish community of Savannah, GA. Asked how he manages to juggle his research and writing with teaching a full schedule of classes, Dr. Tawil laughed and said, “I work at night. I get very little sleep.”
We Take Pride in Our Students

DANIEL SULTAN

Daniel Sultan, a member of the Sephardic community of West Orange, NJ, graduated summa cum laude from Yeshiva University in May 2010, showing exceptional talent in both his Jewish and secular studies. As a pre-dental undergraduate with a simultaneous major in history, Sultan pursued both disciplines with remarkable passion and rigor. Outside of the classroom, Sultan displayed his leadership skills as a member of the history and chemistry clubs as well as in his organic chemistry research lab where he apprenticed with his close mentor Dr. Bruce Hrnejz for three years.

Sultan is currently a semikha student at Yeshiva University’s affiliated Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS). In addition to his rabbinical studies, Daniel is working toward a master’s degree in Jewish studies, Daniel is working to attend dental school next year, while continuing his studies in the semikha program as well as teaching Torah to high school students. In doing this, Sultan will continue to emulate YU’s model of leading a life dedicated to the pursuit of Torah and mitzvot. In doing this, Sultan will continue to emulate YU’s model of leading a life dedicated to the pursuit of Torah and mitzvot.

Sultan’s appreciation and commitment to his Sephardic heritage truly flourished in the years he spent at YU. Having grown up in a largely Ashkenazi community, he had little prior exposure to Sephardic communal life. Upon arriving at YU, Sultan was enthralled with his Sephardic heritage and used his years at YU to reconnect to his Sephardic roots by devoting time and energy to the Sephardic Student Club and various Sephardic Community Program activities.

By his second year of college, Sultan was serving as gabbay [overseer] in the daily Sephardic minyan and became president of the Sephardic Student club. Additionally, he learned both Gemara and Halakha and through the traditional Sephardic derekh halimud [style of learning] which is taught by Rabbi Eliyahu Ben-Haim’s in his daily shiur in the Sephardic Beit Midrash. He also gained much knowledge of Sephardic history under the tutelage of YU’s Sephardic history professors Dr. Ronnie Perelis and Dr. Daniel Tsadik.

Under the guidance of Rabbi Moshe Tessone, director of the Sephardic Community Program (SCP), Daniel was instrumental in planning and promoting Sephardic campus events sponsored by the SCP and various student clubs. Inspired by the significance and profound relevance of Sephardic history which he gleaned from his coursework, Daniel planned several very successful extra-curricular campus lectures featuring Dr. Perelis and Dr. Tsadik, the very YU professors of Judeo-Spanish and Judeo-Arabic history with whom he studied, thus sharing his newfound interests with a broader audience of students and the general campus community.

Sultan plans to attend dental school next year, while continuing his studies in the semikha program as well as teaching Torah to high school students. In doing this, Sultan will continue to emulate YU’s model of leading a life dedicated to the pursuit of Torah and mitzvot. We wish him much success in his years to come.

SIMON BASALELY

Rabbi Simon Basalely hails from the Persian (Mashadi) community of Great Neck, NY. He currently resides in Washington Heights with his wife, Batya, and their 1-year-old daughter, Dena Bracha. Despite the fact that Rabbi Basalely temporarily moved from his home town in Great Neck, he still maintains very strong ties with his community and often delivers shiurim at Congregation Shaare Shalom, The Mashadi Jewish Center in Great Neck, as well as at the Young Mashadi Jewish Center and Congregation Shaare Rachamim.

Rabbi Basalely is in his first year as a fellow of the Israel Henry Beren Institute for Higher Talmudic Studies (Ha-Machon ha-Gavohah le’Talmud) at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS). The Beren fellowship is an opportunity for post-semikha students to continue their intensive study of Talmud and Jewish law while simultaneously pursuing further professional training for service in the rabbinate.

Rabbi Basalely received his ordination from RIETS in 2010 after graduating from Yeshiva College in 2005 with a degree in mathematics. He also studied in Jerusalem’s Yeshivat Mir and Yeshivat Kerem B’Yavneh. Throughout his years at RIETS, Rabbi Basalely developed close relationships with rabbanim, who greatly influenced his halachic thought and general religious outlook on life.

In addition to his rabbinical studies at RIETS, Rabbi Basalely is also pursuing a master’s degree in Jewish education from YU’s Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. More recently he has served as a shoel u’Mesiviv [Talmudic mentor] in YU’s Beit Midrash Program, and as rabbinic intern at the Young Israel of Hillcrest, with a special focus on the Sephardic minyan within that congregation. In addition to his fellowship responsibilities, Rabbi Basalely also serves as a shoel u’Mesiviv in the Yeshiva University High School for Boys and as a Rabbinic Intern at Yeshivat Noam in Paramus, NJ.

Rabbi Basalely plans to continue his service to the Jewish community through working in the rabbinate and through informal Jewish education. He aspires to develop and administer outreach programs for youth that will help them to better understand their Jewish heritage and to encourage their commitment to religious observance. He hopes to use both his training at YU and his varied life experiences as tools that will bring Jewish knowledge and Jewish religious values to the future generations.

Daniel Sultan and Simon Basalely
**WURZWEILER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

Master of Social Work  
(as of September 30, 2009)  
Brenda S. Aragon  
Esther S. Bondi  
Orit Cohen  
Noa Farchi  
Richard Zilka  
Master of Social Work  
(as of May 12, 2010)  
Diana Benmergui

**BERNARD REVEL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JEWISH STUDIES**

Master of Arts  
(as of September 30, 2009)  
Eitan Bendavid  
Israel Hacohen  
Master of Arts  
(as of May 28, 2010)  
Nathan M. Dweck  
Simcha C. Shabtai

**STERN COLLEGE FOR WOMEN**

Associate in Arts  
(as of September 30, 2009)  
Joshonna Livia Sarah Baloul  
Claudia Harary  
Jennifer Cecilie Kalfon  
Yael Leah Mordfin  
Anais Toledano  
Associate in Arts  
(as of January 31, 2010)  
Myrrie Myriam Abitbol  
Irina Aronov  
Kimia Eshaghzadeh  
Deborah Kammoun  
Raquel Laban  
Judith Elana Sason

**AZRIELI GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JEWISH EDUCATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

Master of Science  
(as of May 26, 2010)  
Joshua S. Levy

**ALBERT EINSTEIN COLLEGE OF MEDICINE**

Doctor of Medicine  
(as of June 3, 2010)  
Alaleh Akhavan  
Rafi Kabarriti  
Brenda Freha Ruthe Levy  
Aaron Elie Ovadia  
Nechama Mina Shoshan

**BENJAMIN N. CARDozo SCHOOL OF LAW**

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Lindsey A. Shoshany  
Master of Laws  
(as of June 1, 2010)  
Alain D. Bensimon  
Juris Doctor  
(as of January 15, 2010)  
Chester Asher  
Juris Doctor  
(as of June 1, 2010)  
Jessica Ohebshalom Harooni  
Jeffrey S. Kashi  
Abraham S. Mazoiumi  
Jonathan Soleimanzadeh

**JAMES STRIAR SCHOOL OF GENERAL JEWISH STUDIES/MECHINAH PROGRAM**

Associate in Arts  
(as of September 30, 2009)  
Isaac A. Soussan  
Associate in Arts  
(as of January 31, 2010)  
Simion J. Dahan  
Associate in Arts  
(as of May 28, 2010)  
David Banoun  
Isaac Kuyunov  
Nathanael Marciano  
Joshua T. Shiraynag  
Associate in Arts  
(as of September 30, 2010)  
Nima Tishbi

**ISAAC BREUER COLLEGE OF HEBRAIC STUDIES**

Associate in Arts  
(as of January 31, 2010)  
Eliyahu Sasson  
Associate in Arts  
(as of May 28, 2010)  
Michael Cahane  
Nathanael Gavriel  
Chaim Goleff  
Eitan G. Nimad  
Jonathan Solomonmah  
Associate in Arts  
(as of September 21, 2010)  
Daniel Brai  
Abraham Moshe Tordjman

**YESHIVA COLLEGE**

Bachelor of Arts  
(as of September 30, 2009)  
Saman Y. Saghan  
Ezra C. Sutton  
Bachelor of Arts  
(as of May 28, 2010)  
Yishai Barkhordari  
Eric R. Behar  
Morris A. Bianco  
Liron I. Gamzeh  
David R. Gilboa  
Chaim Goleff  
Avraham H. Harari  
Joshua S. Ishal  
Isaac Kuyunov  
Pedram Lalezar  
Joshua E. Lavid  
Barak Shlouch  
Jonathan Solomonmah  
Daniel Sultan  
Bachelor of Arts  
(as of September 21, 2010)  
Daniel Brai  
Nima Tishbi

**SY SYMS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**

Bachelor of Science  
(as of September 30, 2009)  
Jennifer Cecile Kalfon  
Anais Toledano  
Bachelor of Science  
(as of January 31, 2010)  
Ilona Aronov  
Atara Danielle Siman-Tov  
Bachelor of Science  
(as of May 26, 2010)  
Michele Mikhail Amsellem  
Sarah Elana Buzaglo  
Andrea Chetrit  
Sarah Elana Buzaglo  
Ilona Aronov  
Esty Ima  
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Barbara A. Lianiado  
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Sabrina Esmeralda Moroz  
Sharareh Ester Neissan  
Rachel Shira Nemzer  
Natalie Batzion Niyazov  
Deborah Sarah Asal  
Ohevhalom  
Shanee Liit Ovadia  
Mor Shoshana  
Veranika Ushakova  
Meria Weiss-Faratci  
Kimia Yazdanpanah  
Alessandra Ruth Scholar  
Zacharia  
Rachelle Mazal Zafany  
Sahar Esher Zagh \[14\]
AWARDS AND HONORS

VALEDICTORIANS

James Striar School of General Jewish Studies/Mechinah Program
Isaac Kuyunov

Isaac Breuer College of Hebraic Studies
Jonathan Solaimanzadeh

Yeshiva Program/Mazer School of Talmudic Studies
Avraham Harari

JAMES STRIAR SCHOOL OF GENERAL JEWISH STUDIES/MECHINAH PROGRAM

Sigebert, Manfred, and Mignon Fischel Award for Excellence in Jewish Studies and Character
Isaac Kuyunov

Isaac Araten Memorial Award for Excellence in Talmud
Nima Tishbi

Isaac Araten Memorial Award for Excellence in Bible
David Banoun
Michael Knafo
Nathaniel Marciano

ISAAC BREUER COLLEGE OF HEBRAIC STUDIES

Dr. Isidor Margolis Memorial Award for Excellence in Jewish Studies
Aliaksandr Daineka

Harris Altshul/Moshe Perlstein Memorial Award for Highest Rank in All Jewish Studies
Eliyahou Sasson

Blanche Attas Zuckerman Memorial Award for Excellence in Sephardic Studies
Pedram Lalezar

Benjamin Hurwitz Award for Excellence in Talmud
Jonathan Solaimanzadeh

YESHIVA PROGRAM/MAZER SCHOOL OF TALMUDIC STUDIES

The Max and Sophie Manicoff Manicoff Memorial Award
Avraham Harari

The President Samuel Belkin Memorial Award
Benjamin Kandel

The Rose Rachel Siegel Endowment Foundation Award
Barak Shloush

The Joseph and Lena Hoenig Memorial Award
Joshua Nabtian
Michael Zarifpoor

YESHIVA COLLEGE

Biblical Joseph Prize for Excellence in Economics with a Specialty
Barak Shloush

Chaya and Hershel Schneider Memorial Award for Excellence in Hebrew
Netanel Cohn

Professor Arnold N. and Bertha Lowan Memorial Award for Excellence in Academic Studies in Physics
Nima Tishbi

Dr. Samuel Soloveitchik Prize in Natural Science
Isaac Kuyunov

John Wiley Book Award for Excellence in Chemistry
Jonathan Solaimanzadeh

Joseph Gunner Memorial Award for Excellence in Mathematics
Nima Tishbi

Professor Morris and Gilda Silverman Award for Excellence in Jewish History
Daniel Sultan

Sidney P. Rosenblum Award for Excellence in Jewish Studies and Ethics
Yehuda Lerea

SY SYMS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

The Joseph Kerzner Award for the Outstanding Accounting Senior
Nathanael Marciano

Henry Brout Award for Superior Scholarship and Service in Accounting
Hila Cohen

Bernard Brown Award for Excellence in Business Studies
Shaina Ishaal

The Wall Street Journal Student Achievement Award
Hal Doueck

Bernice and Dr. William Schwartz Award for Excellence in Marketing
Michelle Amelshem

Dean’s Award for Scholastic Achievement in Marketing
Atara Siman-Tov

Mildred Schlessberg Accounting Society Alumni Award for Service in Accounting
Mor Shoshana

Mildred Schlessberg Accounting Society Award for Outstanding Service
Joseph Azulay

Student Council Award for Outstanding Service
Rian Khalidar

STERN COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

Sol and Sarah Friedland Memorial Award for Excellence in Hebrew Literature
Mijal Bitton

Rabbi Chaim Levine Memorial Award for Excellence in Jewish Studies
Pardis Parizadeh

Morris Lipton Memorial Award for Excellence in Philosophy
Miriam Begas

The Dean David Mirsky Memorial Award for Excellence in Jewish Studies and Ethics
Jennifer Deluty

The Fannie and Asher Scharfstein Memorial Award for the Best Paper on Gemilat Hesed
Jenny Deluty

Sociology Department Award for Excellence in Sociology
Barbara Laniado

Thompson Learning Award for Superior Achievement in Chemistry
Tzippora Kanal

WURZWEILER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Outstanding Leadership Award
Diana Benmergui
With Gratitude

We would like to acknowledge with gratitude the generous support of the following families who have taken a lead role in enabling the YU Sephardic Community Program to flourish and for their kind help in providing scholarships that benefit our deserving and needy Sephardic students at Yeshiva University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family/Group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Abergel</td>
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<td>The Ades Family Foundation</td>
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<td>Mr. and Mrs. Albert Allen</td>
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<td>Mr. and Mrs. Ezra Dabah</td>
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<td>Martin Elias and family</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Elyachar Family Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. David Eshaghian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Gaon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The family of Rachel and the late Jack E. Gindi, a&quot;h</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Gindi Family/Century 21 Associates Foundation</td>
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<td>The Leon Levy Family Foundation</td>
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<td>The families of the late Joseph E. and Sam Maleh, a&quot;h</td>
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<td>Mr. and Mrs. Victor Mashaal</td>
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<td>Mr. and Mrs. Salomon Oziel</td>
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<td>Mr. and Mrs. Asher Zamir</td>
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A Joyous and Kosher Passover to You and Your Family

Urgent Appeal For Scholarship Aid For Immigrant And North American Sephardic Students

Many Sephardic students from Canada, France, Morocco, Syria, Iran, Turkey, Bukhara and elsewhere are eager to enter Yeshiva University. We are launching an urgent scholarship appeal for these students to raise the necessary funds to accommodate them. The cost for tuition, dormitory and the minimum food plan, plus fees, is $46,850 per student.

Please complete and detach this form and send it with your tax deductible scholarship gift made out to:

**Yeshiva University Sephardic Student Scholarship Fund**
c/o Dr. Herbert C. Dobrinsky, Yeshiva University • 500 West 185th Street, New York, NY 10033-3201

Credit card contributions will also be accepted. Please call 212.960.0850

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<th>CONTRIBUTION</th>
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<tr>
<td>One Year Full Expendable Scholarship: [ ] $46,850</td>
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<td>Personal Endowed or Blended Scholarship: [ ] $50,000</td>
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<td>Partial Scholarships:</td>
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<td>[ ] $26,000</td>
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Contributions of $50,000 or more will establish a personal endowed scholarship or blended scholarship (half expendable and half endowed) in your name that will be listed in all appropriate University publications in perpetuity.