



The WYHS

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BRAINSTORM

It's Time To Hear What's On Your Mind



DEDICATED IN HONOR OF

RABBI PERRY TIRSCHWELL

WHOSE CAPABLE AND DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP INSPIRES CREATIVITY AND TALENT IN HIS STUDENT BODY

WITH RESPECT AND ADMIRATION,

RIVKA AND NORMAN GINSPARC

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The WYHS BRAINSTORM

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Dear Reader,

Change gets a bad rap these days. Presidential hopefuls bandy it about till it rings hollow. Lawmakers trot it out to promote “politics as usual.” Too much entrenchment in “the system,” too much bureaucracy, and too many people who profit from the status quo—stand in its way. Too soon, we grew disillusioned. Like the Pavlovian dog, we hear change and roll our eyes, don cynicism as Bruce Wayne does his batsuit, and assure ourselves that hope is for the quixotic. But change at its truest is also its most potent and let us not underestimate the potency of the written word. Where weapons and shouting fail, only the deftly-crafted treatise, the fire-and-brimstone op-ed, the deeply-felt missive, the barb-laden satire, and the well-turned sentence will do. Over my four years at the Brainstorm, I have been privileged to witness that distinct brand of change—the one wrought by little more than ideas, initiative, and words strung elegantly together.

No theme could be more apropos for the year’s final issue than “Change-in-Review”—exploring the ways our school, community, and world at large have changed this past year. As I reflect back on this year at the Brainstorm, I am overcome with gratitude to our incredible technical advisor Mrs. Claudia Cohen, and to our stellar assistant editors David Hopen, Nikki Charlap, and Josh Stadlan. I also can not aptly express my hakarat hatov to our consummate faculty advisor, Rabbi Allan Houben, who has changed me with his wisdom, thoughtfulness and creativity. The Brainstorm is the brainchild of Alexa Bryn and the paper owes its existence to her talent and insight. She has set the bar very high for all editors to come after her. I am also deeply indebted to Mrs. Greer for sparking my love of writing and to Rabbi Tirschwell, for this awesome opportunity, and for his invaluable encouragement and counsel. Finally, I am so grateful to our brilliant and dedicated writers who made this paper a



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reality and for you, our dear reader, who came along for the ride.

Change is pretty much the leitmotif of my life right now. I stand on the cusp of it, on a stage with a trapdoor. The audience awaits the re-appearance of my look-alike on the other side, but I just await the fall. With a leaden throat and clenched fists, I shift my weight from toe to toe. The magician affixes his hat and gestures regally with white-gloved hands. He gives the rope a tug. The trapdoor propels downward—and me with it. That drop is at once terrifying and exhilarating, and I pray there are the proverbial sacks of flour at the bottom to cushion the fall. Change is so difficult because it forces you to hand in the name tags you cherish: teenager, highschooler, and for me, editor of the Brainstorm. It is made so much more difficult because I am leaving behind a loving, nurturing home, a school that has become a second home, as well as the cozy niche the Brainstorm has carved for me over high school.

Change is like salt. It doesn't create new flavor as much as it extracts that which is already there. And because a lot, at once, can be a bit hard to swallow. Fortunately, these four years at the Brainstorm have armed me with many a life lesson to better embrace the future. The paper has taught me not to underestimate others—every person is a story that deserves to be told. That words can transcend distance in time, place, and outlook. That mistakes make the best teachers. That the greatest enemy of change is the fear we cannot effect it. And so to politicians in Washington and the disappointed-turned-jaded alike, I humbly offer this message from the Brainstorm: change we can believe in begins when we believe in ourselves.

Sincerely,

Shalva

We genuinely welcome your feedback.
Please e-mail us at WYHSBrainstorm@wyhs.net

An Alumn-Eye View

Saige Rosenberg ('13)

The magic of milestones lies in the auspiciousness of change. We fly in for these events, get dressed up for them, cry at them because we sense a subtle gravitas, we recognize that a monumental shift is about to occur. Weddings mark the transition from fiancés to husband and wife, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs from child to adult. And at graduation, when the last few students claim their diplomas, a magical change had indeed occurred—the shift from student to alum. And although the former spans just four years, the latter is something of a life sentence. An alum is an alum for life. In so many ways, this is more than technical; as graduating classes disperse to different seminaries, colleges and life tracks, they carry with them, perhaps eternally, the memories and ideals and worldviews they have cultivated in high school.



Elie Baratz

Elie Baratz ('08) didn't just dominate the baseball field in his Storm jersey. He brought the athletic ability he honed in WYHS to the college arena, earning the Skyline Conference Rookie of the Week Award. A graduate of both WYHS and Torat Shraga, Elie shed light on this remarkable achievement: "Last

year I won the Skyline Conference Rookie of the Week Award, the first baseball player in my college's history to win that award. College level sports are obviously much more difficult than high school, but success on both levels requires the same things—hard work, both in perfecting skills, and staying healthy and in good shape. It's much harder to do so in college due to the much more intense schedule (30 games as opposed to 15 or so), but therefore it is much more important to put in the work, both during the

season, and before it." Elie currently attends Yeshiva University in New York and notes that, "maintaining religious observance is not all that hard for me, being that I'm in YU. The only real differences are that davening in a minyan is not a requirement here, so going is completely on my wanting to, but growing up in an environment where it was a given that I should go, has transferred over, and I really don't find any difference in difficulty of religious observance." He also observes that "my WYHS experience shaped me in terms of the long days that I have at YU, and in being able to juggle school and sports, without falling behind in either."

Sahar Zaghi ('06) embodies WYHS's commitment to Israel. She relays, "I did Counterpoint with YU for actually three summers, the third summer I was a head counselor. It was definitely one of the best experiences of my life. The program basically takes about 20 counselors from YU and other colleges to the Negev where we run a summer camp for Israeli teens from development towns. The point of the program is,

"An alum is an alum for life"

through the context of teaching English, to build the campers' self confidence and empower them to build a productive future for themselves. The campers have a pretty tough exterior, so penetrating cultural barriers was difficult at first. The depth of the relationships that can be built once mutual trust and respect is established is amazing. I think that for me the program was ultimately about bridging gaps between different populations of Jews. It made me realize that beneath the external differences there is an enormous amount of common ground." Sahar adds, "In regards to 'leaving the bubble'...I honestly don't feel that studying in Stern was so much outside the bubble either... But I can say that now that I'm in Einstein I've realized how integral it is to have

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REFLECTIONS

a strong Jewish background. You get to a point where you become very close with your classmates since these are the people you see and spend time with on a daily basis and you're essentially riding a roller coaster together. It's important to feel strongly about where you come from and what you believe in order to know where it's appropriate to draw your boundaries. It's a balance I'm still learning and I'm sure it's never completely figured out but I've found that if I remember my priorities in difficult situations it gives the clarity to make solid decisions."

Still in her year at Michlala in Israel, immediate past Brainstorm Editor in Chief Chana Brauser ('10) shared: "It's hard to describe the seminary experience because it is something unlike anything I've ever experienced before. You've got one year in the holiest place in the world, surrounded by dozens of girls from around the world (at Michlala, I've met girls from Gibraltar, Belgium, Venezuela, England, Australia, and South Africa, to name a few!), fascinating, deep teachers and rabbis, and what seems like a hundred different classes to choose from—and all this on the backdrop of this intensely multicultural country with incredibly deep-seated spiritual and historic roots that is home to so many different types of people. It's about finding a balance between spending hours in the library, discovering new sefarim and entertaining perspectives you've never before been exposed to, and finding time to take a long walk or bus ride to the Kotel and, after pouring your heart out to Hashem, spending a few minutes just looking around and appreciating the swarms of different people, ranging from streimel-topped Chassidim to colorfully-clad groups of Nigerian tourists. To say that it's overwhelming would probably be true, but it's also the experience of a lifetime"

Chana continues, "I often try to think back to how my high school experiences have shaped me, and one of the elements of my WYHS experience that I

think has been the most impactful on my seminary year is the level of diversity and acceptance that the school provides to its students. At WYHS, there is probably a larger range of student backgrounds than at most yeshiva high schools. That's for a variety of reasons—among them, I think, the fact that whereas in New York, there are at least 6 different potential schools for the average eighth grade Orthodox kid to choose from, Florida has fewer options, and so our school has shaped itself in such a way that it can stand in the place of those six schools for that one kid. So I think I gained an appreciation for diversity and a strong belief in the importance of Ahavas Yisrael, which has helped me through this incredible year of new faces and new perspectives in a way that I believe has been rather unique."

**“to leave WYHS
is not to sever a bond
but to develop it”**

Alum Ariella Davis, ('09) who has since made Aliyah, echoes this sentiment: "Something I found quite impressive about WYHS is its tolerance for people: no matter your

background, you were accepted and taken care of. Tolerance of others is a notion which I so greatly believe in and which is lamentably so lacking in this world. Now that I live in Israel, a country that I love but which regrettably also encompasses the greatest amount of intolerance I have ever experienced whether it be between Arabs and Jews or the secular and the Ultra-Orthodox, I have never appreciated the tolerant environment of WYHS more."

The remarkable thing about high school is its fluidity. The fabric of the student body is perpetually in flux. Each September marks an irrevocable status change: the absence of the seniors as they embark on new horizons, the arrival of sweaty-palmed, fresh-faced freshmen, and the bumped up middle grades, trying their new titles on for size. But if these four alumni are any indication, to leave WYHS is not to sever a bond but to develop it, to channel it into the world beyond high school hallways.



My Westernized, Liberal, Pluralistic Conclusion: *All Jews Should be Observant*

Josh Stadlan ('11)

“Make sure to let them know that you’re proud of your identity,” I was told. Sure. After all, I am proud of who I am. Because, well, I know who I am. I know, to a considerable extent, how confident I am of the Bible’s veracity. I know, to a fair limit, how much I trust the authority of our Sages. I know, to a substantial degree, how prudent I am regarding the 613 commandments. I know, to an appreciable level, how satisfied I am with the concept of an omnipotent G-d. And I know, beyond reasonable doubt, how much I intend to grapple, give, gain, and grow.

But how do I possibly communicate that to my new friend in just a few conversations; to my interviewer, in just a few minutes; to the admissions officers at my top-choice college, in less than a thousand words? Do I say I am an Orthodox Jew? Saying so often conjures up an intimidating image of sidelock-wearing, black overcoat-clad religious fundamentalists. Such a term may, unfortunately, invalidate my commitment to intellectual integrity and my values of pluralism. Do I think Haredi Jews are outdated, irrational extremists? Certainly not. But that depiction does seem to accurately describe one pervading stereotype, a stereotype I am not prepared to risk eliciting.

Ah, but I can interject that magical modifier, “modern!” I am a modern Orthodox Jew! In fact, as I am, thank G-d, alive today, I would have much trouble becoming an ancient Jew. Modern? What does that add? True, the term “Modern Orthodox” does resonate in some ears as a movement, but few brains associated with those ears know how to discern whether the label refers to “strictly Orthodox, but uses a computer” or “average American, except on Saturday and Jewish holidays.” On the other hand, sometimes it’s out of consideration for the individuals who do know a thing or two about Modern Orthodoxy, based on their readings and observations, that I refrain from clinging to the

movement’s name. “Oh, the Modern Orthodox—yeah, they don’t celebrate Thanksgiving;” “Those Modern Orthodox, the newspaper article said they’ll receive heart transplants, but refuse to give them;” or, “Wait, Modern Orthodox—they really have something against women serving leadership roles.” Even those who identify as Modern Orthodox often use the term derogatorily. During *maariv* on *motzei*

“Who knew Charlie Sheen is Jewish! And wait- Gadhafi may have Jewish blood too!”

shabbat I saw a father sitting next to his young daughter, patiently reviewing the prayers with her. I smiled. Apparently two other men also noticed the beautiful scene. They approached the father and said, “Hey, sir, this is a Modern Orthodox synagogue, we’re Modern Orthodox here. We don’t teach girls to read.” Suffice it to say, the joke didn’t get too much laughter from me.

To avoid the implications of defining myself by the movement, maybe I will choose the term “religious Jew.” On second thought, who am I to declare that a spiritual, devout Jew, active in a Reform temple, is “non-religious”? “Religious” speaks of character, not ideological and practical identification.

Perhaps, I will simply identify myself as just “Jewish,” like the popular option on Facebook profiles. Except, the tabloids have hijacked the term and have claimed it as their own paparazzi triggerword. Who knew? Charlie Sheen is Jewish! And wait—Gadhafi may have Jewish blood, too! The fonder the celebrity reporter is of the description, the less fond I am of using the word to encapsulate my religious life.

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TECHNOLOGY

Reign of Texters:

How Facebook has changed the face of political revolution

Gabriella Sobol ('13)

It's our laundry list of social networking: Twitter. Tumblr. Digg. Myspace. AIM. Blogster. Daily-Booth. BBM. Flickr. Foursquare. Facebook. Thanks to these sites, we can broadcast our earth-shattering dinner plans—spaghetti and meatballs, FYI—or browse through birthday party photo albums from years past, with cake-in-our-hair moments we'd prefer were not digitally preserved on the Internet. But now social networking is serving a decidedly more important purpose: helping young people around the world foment revolution.

The Middle East has long been a hotbed of political unrest and toppled regimes. Add Facebook and a restless youth into the mix and you've cooked yourself a revolution. As Hassan Nafaa, a political-science professor at Cairo University put it: "These young people have done more in a few weeks than their parents did in 30 years [...] They are the Internet Generation. Or the Facebook Generation. Or, just call them the Miracle Generation."

Power in the hands of this younger demographic is a recent development. As Time Magazine notes, "For years, Middle East experts had described Arab youth as frustrated but feckless: they disliked and distrusted their authoritarian rulers, they keenly felt their limited economic prospects, but they were too politically emasculated to press for change." Professor Naffa agrees: "If you would have said some years ago, that my students would have been responsible for demo-

cratic change in Egypt, I would have laughed." So what changed? Social networking. When a university student named Kamel, who lives in Egypt, found fault with Mubarak's reign, he did not have to choose between violence and silence. Instead, he aired his grievances in a brand-new forum: a blog he created. Similarly, when a young businessman, Khaled Said, was beaten to death by policemen in Alexandria, a Facebook page entitled "We are all Khaled Said" was created by an anonymous administrator who was later revealed to be Wael Ghonim, a Google executive. Though enacted by young adults, most of whom have no political experience, these unorthodox methods have seen real results internationally: "The class of 2011 has felled two despots and forced other famously inflexible rulers to make concessions, some dramatic (Yemen's longtime President Ali Abdullah Saleh

has promised not to run for re-election) and some desperate (King Hamad has offered every Bahraini household the equivalent of \$2,700). And all this was achieved by largely peaceful demonstrations and despite the absence of clear leaders." (Time Magazine)

Governments are still unsure about how to best deal with this new type of political upheaval. When a Facebook account set up by twenty-year-old Fadi Quran called for a sit-in in front of the Egyptian embassy, Quran was forced to take it down and was then questioned for hours. Quran remarked: "It was truly obvious they had never had to deal with this type of



Drug Test Results are In: Positive or Negative?

Danielle Sobol ('13)

The new “above-the-influence” ad is deceptively tepid. Set to a jaunty tune, the ad follows two teenagers as they go about an “ordinary day”—cereal in front of the TV, shoelaces tied on the sidewalk, shopping, smiles, music, laughter. Two arrows are drawn above the fresh-faced adolescents as they spin, supine, on a school-yard merry-go-round, with i-Pod headphones shared between them. But the thrust of the ad, as well as many other similar ads administered by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, is decidedly more impactful: drugs are not necessary to enjoy your life and have a good time.

“But how does drug use play into the Modern Orthodox Jewish world?”

On its website, the “above the influence” campaign explains its mission to “help teens stay above the influence,” noting that “the more aware you are of the influences around you, the better prepared you will be to stand up to the pressures that keep us down.” Campaigns similar to the one pushed by the Office of National Drug Policy are prevalent in high schools, colleges and even middle schools across America.

But how does drug use play into the Modern Orthodox Jewish world, specifically amongst the teenage demographic? In the past, drug use was perceived as a “goyish” problem and not an issue for Jewish teens. As Lewis Abrams, a West Orange psychotherapist who has counseled adolescents with addictions for about three decades puts it, “I think there is a stigma in the Jewish community that we have been fighting for years — that it can’t happen to our kids, that it can’t happen to our community.” (“Teen Educator Tackles Substance Abuse Stigma”)

But more recently, Jewish educators have begun

addressing the dangers and consequences of teenage drug and alcohol abuse. In fact in 2008, the Orthodox Union, or OU, started a program in 14 high schools to raise awareness about the dangers of drug use and to prevent students from using drugs, alcohol or other mind-altering substances.

The program, entitled Safe Schools Yeshiva Network Policy, involves random drug testing, locker searches, and forced intervention when a student tests positive or is found with drugs in his or her possession. Both parent and child must sign a waiver at the beginning of the school year allowing the child to be searched, randomly drug tested, and given treatment in the event of discovered drug use. If students admit to a problem on their own, no disciplinary action is taken against them and the school provides medical and emotional support. However, if a child tests positive in a random drug test or is found with drugs in his or her possession, severe disciplinary action can be meted out, with the potential for expulsion if the student fails to comply with the school’s standards for behavior and treatment.

Proponents of the program point out that random testing provides students with an “excuse” they can offer friends when pressured to use drugs. Although part of the program’s objective is to provide help once an issue is detected, its primary goal is to show kids that the schools they attend are serious about preventing drug use and that the adults around them care about their well being and are willing to help them. The full policy can be currently viewed on the OU website. Despite disparity in implementation, the general consensus of the schools involved in the program seems to be that as a part of the modern world, Jewish teenagers—even those who attend private yeshiva high schools—are exposed to certain negative influences concerning substance abuse which needs to be counteracted by



FIELD REPORT

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emphasizing the dangers of drug use as well as discouraging kids from using them.

This year, WYHS adopted a new drug prevention policy very similar to the OU's. Although WYHS has always been on top of this sensitive issue, giving informative lectures on the dangers of drug use, it has upped its program this year by doing random drug testing—via hair samples—on the entire student body. Rabbi Tirschwell shed light on this change, explaining that WYHS will help further guide its students in the right direction to counterbalance the “glamorized” version of illegal substances presented to students by the media. Rabbi Tirschwell offers the following analogy: “Though we all understand that foods rich in calories, cholesterol, and fat are bad for us, many of us indulge in them without regard for the consequences, unless our doctors, friends or family inspire us to avoid them. Some people have similar challenges with controlled substances, which are even more dangerous, though their tell tale signs can be harder to detect. By drug testing, we are endeavoring to help students do what they know intellectually is in their best interest—to ‘say no to drugs.’”

Opinion on drug testing varies not only between educators but students as well. The Brainstorm recently conducted a poll to glean further insight into the attitudes of the WYHS student body on drug testing. 69.2% of respondents thought that their high school should randomly drug test its students and 56.9% of the respondents felt that randomized drug testing is an effective tool to deter student drug use. Of the respondents who did not think their school should conduct random drug tests, 52% felt that it unfairly penalizes those who don't do drugs and 48% felt that it is an invasion of privacy. In fact, one student commented that schools should “focus on education of drugs to prevent it before it happens” while another felt that hair sampling was “more invasive” than necessary. When asked what specifically they felt drug testing accomplishes, about 53.2% of respondents felt that drug testing prevents students from begin-

ning to experiment with drugs and 27.4% believed that it raises awareness about the dangers of drug use. Students also felt that drug testing “helped the school take notice of the students who need help” and “showed that the school is focused on the issue of drug use.”

Although this issue is still being debated, not only in WYHS, but in modern orthodox high schools across America, the results are in—and it seems as if school wide random drug testing is gaining increasing popularity among educators who value it as a tool to discourage and prevent drug use. Not only that, but many students themselves feel that drug testing curbs drug use, perhaps because fear of disciplinary action often outweighs the desire to use drugs. Ultimately, schools and drug policies may vary but one thing remains the same: more powerful than peer pressure is the teen who resists it—and chooses that little white arrow instead.

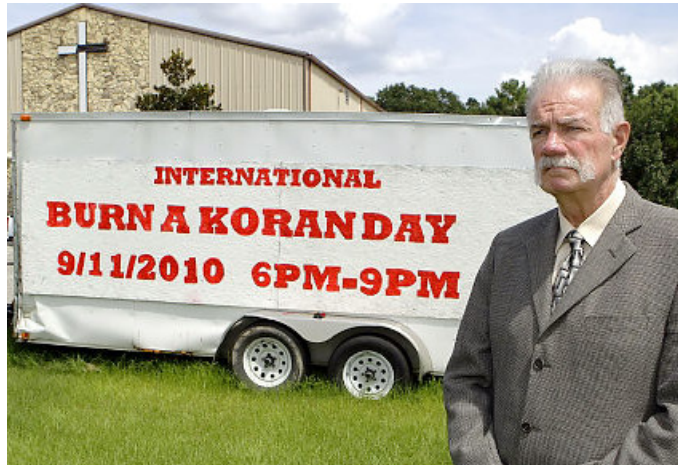




Taking the C out of “P.C.”

Elana Gelman ('12)

I spent some of post Superbowl Monday night re-watching the high-caliber commercials from the big game, specifically the famous Volkswagen “Darth Vader” commercial, a favorite of mine. While surfing other Volkswagen commercials, I discovered a shocking alternative ad. The 25 second clip begins with a black slide that reads “German Engineering” and then follows an Arab—decked out in a houndstooth-kiffiyeh—as he walks down porch steps and enters a Volkswagen Polo. The man drives through the street for five seconds and then parks next to an outdoor cafe. The camera first zooms in to the man to show a bomb strapped to his chest and then zooms out to show an explosion completely confined to the car. The end slide reads “VW Polo. Small yet tough”.



approximately 60% of its population was Jewish. In that same year, the town of Skokie brought the issue to court on the grounds that the march was meant to “promote hatred against persons of Jewish faith or ancestry...inflict severe emotional harm on the Jewish

population in Skokie (and especially on the survivors of the Holocaust), and that it would incite an ‘uncontrollably’ violent response and lead to serious ‘bloodshed’.” These three seemingly airtight claims were all dismissed on technicalities. Even though a swastika is objectively a symbol for discrimination and violence, the problem

Skokie faced was that it is a “dangerous business making First Amendment rights turn on judgments about a speaker’s subjective intent...and police, prosecutors and jurors are very prone to attribute evil intentions to those whose views they despise.” When the Nazi March was broadcasted nationwide, it stirred up much resentment but also strengthened public faith in the legal system and its commitment to free speech.

Today, P.C. is our national pre-occupation. We tiptoe around issues for fear of political incorrectness. Fur

Needless to say, I was appalled that VW would champion its “German Engineering” by showing how a suicide bomber’s attempt at a cataclysmic bloodbath was undermined by an expertly-engineered car. It was just so...politically incorrect. After extensively researching the commercial, I discovered that VW denied ownership of the clip and dubbed it a hoax. Thanks to the First Amendment to the Constitution, it seems that the ad, though wildly crass, is in fact legal. But how do we distinguish between free speech and hate speech and who on earth decides what those boundaries are?

“P.C. is our national pre-occupation”

coats rarely grace the glossy pages of fashion magazines—we’d rather keep our fur coats tucked away between woolly winter sweaters—and our P.C. reps untarnished—than get blasted with PETA’s notorious red paint. At the same time, we shudder when the political correctness we so carefully—too carefully?—protect is taken to dangerous extremes. Case in point: Terry Jones, “the controversial Florida preacher” who “first lit a spark on Facebook when he called for people around the world to set ablaze thousands of copies of the Muslim holy books

On July 9, 1978, the National Socialist Party of America, more infamously known as the American Nazi Party, marched through the streets of Skokie, Illinois—a small suburb that was targeted because



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Clearly, labels can say a lot but mean very little. “Mitzvot—observant Jew” is one of the better designations. Once you clear the minor obstacle of explaining what a mitzvah is, the tag is efficient and coherent. It describes a concrete behavior, which is generally simpler to explain than an intangible philosophy. Nevertheless, I would be bordering on dishonesty by employing such a description. A man pursuing all knowledge cannot claim to be all-knowing; so too, a man pursuing mitzvot-observance and following the laws that he has learned of cannot claim to be mitzvot-observant. Mitzvot-observance is a goal.

Rather, I am proud to proclaim that I am an observant Jew; in my search for truth, I observe the world around me. This study of life—even of the most mundane events and interactions—has affirmed the truths encapsulated by the cornerstones of my Jewish observance, Torah and Mitzvot. To me, all Jews should be observant in that their casual observations of the world around them enhance their religious observance. With this outlook, even Fruit by the Foot can teach a lesson in “midah k’neged midah” and even a sucking candy can testify to man’s inherent goodness.

I. My ears could discern nothing from the cacophonous ambience of the middle-school hallway. I therefore perceived no indication that my trajectory would lead me directly into a collision with Jared, a good friend and classmate who was also quite distracted as he headed

toward me. Jared had begun to chew on

“Labels can say a lot but mean very little”

one end of a Berry Berry Twist Fruit by the Foot, the fruit candy famous for its length and infamous for its resistance to toothbrush and floss. Now, with both of us strewn on the tile floor, the other end of his Fruit by the Foot landed—I kid you not—by his foot. I acted upon an immature, base impulse; my hand



shot out and snatched about ten inches of the Fruit by the Foot. The split-second satisfaction produced by grasping a piece of the red-and-blue-swirled sugary tape was immediately overpowered by what felt like an eternity of regret and disappointment. Did I really just steal food from my friend? Perhaps my response was less dramatic, as the “eternity” ended rather abruptly when Jared playfully exclaimed “hey!,” and a smile emerged on his face. After all, assuming permission to grab a French fry is acceptable among friends. My friend Jared didn’t mind, so all was okay.

The following week, our history teacher awarded us with an in-class “party.” But alas, the junk food would have to wait as I tended to a literary-magazine emergency. A friend of mine was so kind as to prepare a plate of junk-food for me but was sorry that before he could reserve one of them for me, all of the Fruit by the Foot snacks had been taken. Not one Fruit by the Foot left for me. Not one. This must be a joke, I thought to myself, when I learned that those snacks were brought to the party by none other than Jared.

To be observant, in both understandings of the word, is to observe the goings on around us and to take lessons from them. For me, a fortuitous collision in the hallway yielded a very profound observation: the universe favors justice. Our every action has



Hashkafa cont.

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consequence, and our every deed is recorded, no matter how trivial and insignificant. According to Nachmanides, the entire book of Genesis was written as a foundation to the Torah to convey such a message.

II. Irritating? Truthfully, yes—very irritating. But a crying toddler sitting by my side couldn't spoil my otherwise pleasant Shabbat, I reminded myself. Nevertheless, the young girl's demand—along with her father's stern, uncompromising, yet obviously fair answer—reverberated in my left ear.

“Abba, gimme that CANDY!” insisted the drama queen, lingering on the word “candy” till those two syllables were indistinguishable from incoherent screaming.

“You already had two at lunch; no more candy,” repeated her father, restraining himself from shouting. As her screams increased in volume, the father made the tough call of forsaking the lesson and instead pacifying his whiny daughter with the small, circular, plastic-wrapped candy. “Fine, take it.”

Expectedly, the girl's reddened, tear-filled face reverted back to a happy-go-lucky disposition. Expectedly, her father immediately regretted exposing his weakness and reinforcing his daughter's obnoxious behavior. Unexpectedly, the toddler pocketed the candy. She then walked across the center of the prayer hall. She marched right over to another teary young girl, sitting alone and slumped against the southern wall of the room.

“Here you go.”

She dropped the candy in front of the other girl before immediately running back to her Abba.

Little did she know that by sharing that small, circular, plastic-wrapped piece of candy, she taught a fellow Jew an invaluable lesson: Man is, at his

core, a creature in the image of G-d and possesses the G-dlike capability to bestow kindness. It goes without saying, then, that everyone deserves the benefit of the doubt. The concept of the neshamah, the idea of tzelem Elokim, the kabbalistic belief in tzimzum, and quotes from Ethics of Our Fathers should all come to mind.

Those are a just a couple of treasured experiences of mine that have ascribed meaning to and have been ascribed meaning by my religious observance. To outsiders, they are trivial. But that is because only I observed them; only I decided what they signified. Your little events of meaning may differ in plot but not in importance. Personal lessons from the observation of everyday life and the recognition of the wonders

of this world—occurring to you at the least expected times and places, like in the aforementioned stories—invigorate the absolute truths found in our Torah and in the wisdom of our Sages.

But don't take my word for it. Be active in your search for truth. Be observant. For it takes a lot more than just a few persuasive rants by fundamentalist atheist-biologist Richard Dawkins, a couple news reports on unthinkable atrocities, and a handful of religiously compromising situations to uproot a deep-seated weltanschauung molded by accurate and personal observations engrained in one's heart, mind, and soul. And that, my friends, is a resilience that I myself have observed.

“Be Observant”



2012... in 2011: The Japan Disaster and its Consequences

Matthew Silkin ('14)

Gone are the halcyon days when a mention of the small island off of the Pacific would evoke Sushi or anime. "Earthquake" is the new trigger-word for Japan, and with this change, the global sense of an impending apocalypse. Indeed, when the whopping 9.0 magnitude tremor hit the coast of Japan, the day was shortened by about 6 microseconds, Japan sunk about 8 feet, and a crippled nuclear reactor could spell

**"...many are left homeless,
and highways are
blocked for miles"**

certain doom for the general area. At 2:56 P.M. JST on March 11, people were going about their business when the massive earthquake struck the northeast coast, followed by a series of tsunamis. Aftershock tremors continued to pound the area, making reconstruction difficult. Jefferson International Limited, a banking corporation, lost \$10 billion, many are left homeless, and highways are blocked for miles. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano declared in the Huffington Post, "Our initial assessment indicates that there has already been enormous damage. We will make maximum relief effort based on this assessment."

The earthquake was the largest the world has seen since the government started keeping records in 1800, even worse than an 8.2 magnitude earthquake in 1923. Not surprisingly, the challenge of getting out of Japan in the aftermath proved quite complicated. Mrs. Rachel Osgood, a former WYHS

faculty member who survived the tragedy, told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that she "was willing to do anything within her power to get out of the country." The Osgoods traveled to Japan after Mrs. Osgood's husband, Ken Osgood, a Professor of American Foreign Policy at Williams College in Massachusetts, was invited to speak at the University of Tokyo. The trip would soon turn nightmarish. When the earthquake struck, the Osgoods found themselves stuck in a foreign country as it grappled with one of its most crippling natural disasters. As Mrs. Osgood wrote on her Facebook page: "Barely hanging in there. No way to get to the airport, people's phone alarms predicting another powerful quake to hit here soon. ... Trying not to cry. Just want to get home and see my kids."

I had a chance to speak to Mrs. Osgood about her experiences in Japan. I wondered where she was when the earthquake hit. She explained, "We were on a bullet train about 80 miles south of Tokyo when we felt the train shaking." She conveyed that "Since I grew up in Pennsylvania, this was my first earth-



The King's Speech has Noble Aspirations How the movie has changed the speech community

Aaron Zimmerman ('13)

Speech is power. So affirms *The King's Speech*, the critically acclaimed movie awarded Best Picture of 2011 by the Academy of Motion Pictures. The film tells the moving story of King George VI, a man who assumes the throne in England after his brother, the rightful heir, abdicates before the Second World War. King George, thrust into this pivotal historical position, struggles to overcome a speech impediment, and, with the succor of a therapist by the name of Lionel Logue, ultimately learns to live with his stammer. As the accolades and media fanfare subside, however, fans of the film are left to wonder: has *The King's Speech* had a lasting impact on the global speech community?



I contacted Dale Williams, head of Boca Raton's chapter of the National Stuttering Association and he graciously shared his thoughts on the matter. He noted that "although the therapy techniques—marbles, profanity, rolling around on the floor, etc.—were outdated at best, the movie got a lot of things right. In the first scene, for example, we see the looks on the faces of the listeners—polite, but clearly uncomfortable—and how they only focus on how the king is speaking, not what he's saying. Something else familiar to people who stutter is the final scene when the king has to verbally perform and viewers can see how incredibly stressful that is." Dale adds, "Yes, many people are afraid of public speaking, but

this isn't fear of losing your place or saying too many ums or ahs." In the case of King George, "He's afraid of opening his mouth and nothing coming out."

Colin Firth, who plays King George and received the Best Actor award for his performance, explains in an interview with the British Stammering Association (BSA) that his "main concern really has been... that not many films have addressed [the issue of speech impediments] – except to make a mockery of

“The movie got a lot of things right”

it or to use it for comedy." Fortunately, *The King's Speech* has shed light on a condition that over 700,000 people face in the UK alone. The British Stammering Association "welcomes the release of *The King's Speech*," noting that "the film offers a golden opportunity to talk openly about stammering. Too often, stammering is treated as embarrassing and shameful, something that may not be talked about in polite company. BSA profoundly disagrees with this view and we welcome the opportunity for more openness around this potentially serious communication disability." Additionally, Harry Dhillon, the president of the Trojan speakers club who has struggled with stammering his entire life, asserted that the film "will do something amazing for people in [the UK]" because now "it's ok to talk about a stammer; we don't have to hide anymore. It's no longer a taboo... it's been a Godsend."

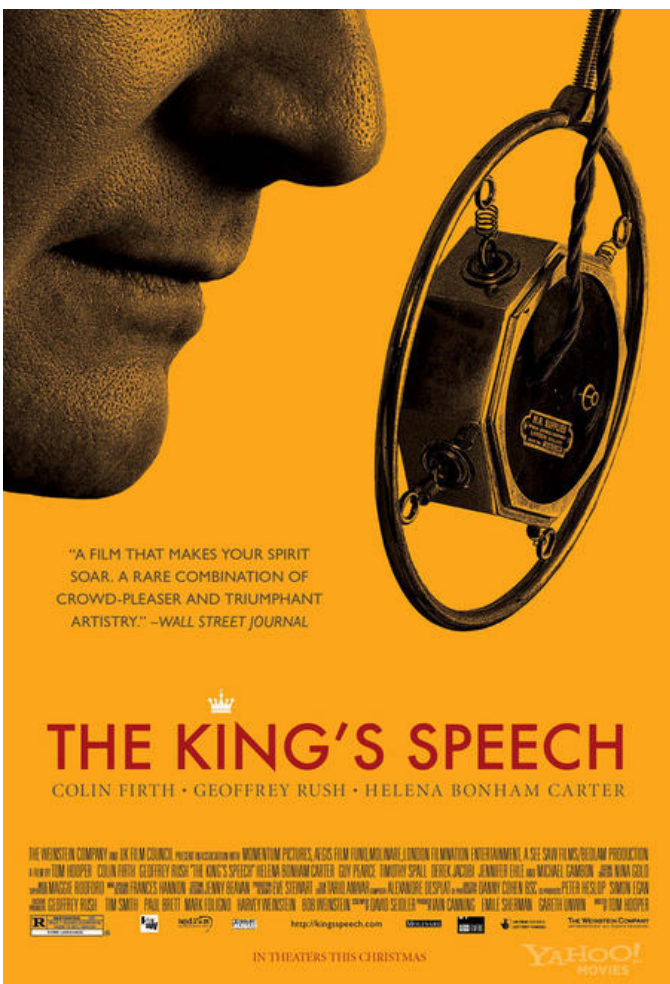
The King's Speech reveals that a speech impediment is far more than just having a tough time speaking. Learning to cope with a vocal disability does not just include the physical aspects of dealing with one's speech but also the emotional challenges of feeling comfortable as an individual. As Dale Williams says so succinctly, "What I liked best about the movie was that the king didn't begin to make progress until he stopped focusing on speech mechanics and got below the surface—to his emotions, thoughts about



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speech & stuttering, etc. That is very realistic. It's also worth noting that the progress he made was not fluent speech, but learning how to say what he needed to say, even if he still stuttered. That is often the real goal of treatment.”

King George VI was not the first leader in history who suffered from speech impairment. He shares that challenge with the greatest leader of all time: our very own Moshe Rabbeinu. Both Moshe and King George managed their speech impediments and refused to let their disabilities constrain them. These heroes demonstrate that, with persistence and tenacity, one can overcome any obstacle. The theme of *The King's Speech*, then, is really one of hope—not just for the speech community but for society at large. Spreading awareness, inspiring internationally, and evincing an important moral, *The King's Speech* surely deserves its title as the Best Picture of 2011.



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quake, so it was scary, a little frustrating, being that I do not know Japanese and could not get help, and overall difficult.” How did the Osgoods manage to return to America safely? Answers Mrs. Osgood, “We got lucky. A Japanese friend told us that Narita

“Mrs. Osgood wrote on her Facebook page: ‘Barely hanging in there’”

Airport was open, so we spent the night in a hotel lobby, and the next day, took the Narita Express train to the airport. We boarded a Boeing 747 that took us back to America.” Mrs. Osgood definitely still feels the impact of the trip. She remarks that, “I have had a lot of post traumatic stress, but the whole experience made me feel a lot closer to friends and family and realize how much people care for each other.” Though they returned home safely to their children, the Osgoods did not forget the less fortunate: “In Japan, we took out a couple hundred dollars that we didn’t use, so we went to the Salvation Army when we got home and donated the unused money.”



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activism before.” Proponents believe that this new strain of political revolution will also affect the United States’ involvement in foreign affairs. As one Bahraini activist explained: “People said it couldn’t happen, because the U.S. supported Mubarak, but still he fell. Now we don’t need the U.S. on our side to get what we want. Now we know we can do it for ourselves.”

This revolutionary spirit is catching: protests are beginning to crop up in Algeria, Libya Syria, and Morocco, and many other Arab countries. As El General, the revolution’s unofficial rapper remarked in Time

Magazine: “the youth of the Arab world are not done yet.” Perhaps

“This revolutionary spirit is catching”

this nascent allure for reform stems from exposure to western ideals via the Internet. Despots used to be able to prevent evidence of a more democratic way of life from infiltrating the media and imaginations of their people. Now, with the “click of a mouse” anyone can access information about the Western World.

Although this Facebook Generation in Egypt staged a revolt, the question still remains: is it equipped to implement and maintain new governments? Though there seems to be both a general demand for democracy and dissatisfaction with the old regime, it is unclear what type of government these revolutionaries want in its place. As Egyptian student Khaled Kamel explained, in a sentence that seems to capture the attitude of his Facebook Generation, “I don’t care who ends up running this country, as long as I have the ability to change them if I don’t like them.”

Source: Time Magazine: “Rage, Rap, and Revolution: Inside the Arab Youthquake”



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on September 11, a day he dubbed “International Burn a Koran Day” (“Who is Terry Jones? Pastor Behind Burn a Koran Day”). But unlike the Nazi marchers, Jones was able to capitalize on “social media” and thereby “achieved a kind of global outreach he could only have dreamed about when a few newspapers and TV networks determined what ideas received international circulation” (The Social Media Future). However, this widespread exposure did not translate into national support, as many Americans balked at the prospect of book burning. General David Petraeus warned that burning the Koran in America could be potentially detrimental and life-threatening to troops currently serving in Afghanistan. His fears were confirmed when Jones’s eventual burning of a Koran in March sparked the Mazar-i-Sharif attack in Afghanistan.

“But how do we distinguish between free speech and hate speech?”

As brilliant as they were, the Founding Fathers certainly could not anticipate Facebook and Twitter—or the problems it would pose for a country dedicated to curbing hate speech on the one hand, and preserving freedom of speech, on the other. Today, combatants of hate speech can try to prevent “Burn a Koran Day” and other events like it via non-violent protests and communication with government representatives. In spite of all efforts, though, Nazi Marchers, book-burning pastors, and other saboteurs of real freedom of speech will inevitably rear their heads. Yet as federal judge Bernard Decker of the Skokie ordinance expressed, “It is better to allow those who preach racial hatred to expend their venom in rhetoric rather than to be panicked into embarking on the dangerous course of permitting the government to decide what its citizens may say and hear The ability of American society to tolerate the advocacy of even hateful doctrines ... is perhaps the best protection we have against the establishment of any Nazi-type regime in this country.”



Our NFL Reporter is Not Locked Out

Jake Siegel ('12)

Despite the labor unrest at the NFL, our sports reporter Jake Siegel was on the job interviewing Rennie Curran, a professional athlete effecting positive change. Curran is a linebacker for the Tennessee Titans and an individual committed to giving back. A former Georgia Bulldog, he achieved record-breaking statistics: he is “the first Bulldog since 1996-97 (Greg Bright) to record at least 100 tackles in back-to-back campaigns” and “despite playing only three seasons at Georgia, Curran ranked 16th in school history with 298 career tackles.” (titansonline.com) He has also been very involved with the NFL Play 60, a nutrition and fitness program that aims to combat childhood obesity.



Titan Rennie Curran

JS: Rennie, how does it feel to be a Titan?

RC: It's great. Just playing in the NFL is a dream come true for me. But being a Titan is truly great and I feel blessed to be able to play for them.

JS: How does it feel to play for new head coach Mike Munchak?

RC: I'm excited to play for Coach Munchak. He will teach us to properly prepare for Sundays so we can come up with a "W." Coach Munchak is a former NFL player who made it to the Hall of Fame and has been around the league for a long time. He has so much football experience, and I look forward to playing under him.

JS: Who are some of the defensive playmakers on the Titans?

RC: Our safety Mike Griffin, defensive back Chris Hope, and defensive lineman Jason Babin are consistent playmakers.

JS: Rennie, how do you use your football career as a platform to promote and exemplify positive change in the world?

RC: I promote positive change by being very active in my community, where I just recently sponsored a charity event. I am also involved in the NFL Play 60 program, which is a national youth health and fitness campaign that encourages kids to stay healthy and physically active for at least one hour a day. Furthermore, I speak at and constantly visit numerous hospitals in Tennessee and in Georgia.



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No More Pencils, No More Books... Now What?

Leora Litwin ('12)

Summeritis, related to that highly-contagious senioritis, manifests itself sometime after Pesach vacation, when the prospect of swimming pools and a June sun diverts many a committed student from AP books and final exam review sheets. But when that last bell of the school year rings and idle relaxation turns monotonous, how do students intend to fill those long summer months?

Freshmen often return to sleep away camp for their final summer as campers, especially if they have been attending the same camp for a number of years. Case in point: freshman Ari Clements. Ari has been attending Camp Moshava in Honesdale, Pennsylvania for the past four years and this upcoming summer will be no exception. He was initially inclined to choose a summer path that would look more prestigious for his college resume, but ultimately “realized that this is my last summer that I can be a camper and I would have regretted missing out on those memories. I will have the following summers to get a job.” Ari’s classmate, Elyse Tripp has decided on an alternative option for ninth graders: Achva West. The summer program is advertised as an unforgettable touring experience across the western United States. “There were so many people signed up for this summer that four buses are now being arranged,” exclaimed Elyse when describing her anticipation for her 2011 Achva experience.



a branch of programs that capitalize on the opportunities, religious and educational, available in Israel. Sophomore Zevi Litwin will journey to Israel on NCSY Kollel. He relayed, “I am most excited to meet boys from all over because I never attended sleep away camp as a kid.”

Juniors, for their part, may begin to assume the responsibilities of adulthood by interning with professionals or accepting jobs at sleep away camps, perhaps even the ones that they once attended as campers. Junior Amy Glaun is taking advantage of summer vacation to explore the fashion industry. She explains: “This summer I am taking courses at FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology) in New York City. I have chosen to take courses on interior design and fashion merchandising. I am very excited to be able to enrich my understanding and abilities in the fashion world. Not only will I be learning, I will be going on trips to different runways and shops with top experts in order to get a real feel of the ‘fashion world’. I am broadening my horizons with all the amazing opportunities we high school teenagers have today” Adds Amy, “I cannot wait to go to FIT this summer because I am going to be able to branch out, meet people with similar interests, get hands on assistance to the start of my future, while seeing a whole new world of fashion.”



“Adina San Solo aims to imbue her summer with *chesed*”

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Sophomores, bereft of their familiar sleep-away camp safe havens, might embark on courageous, independence-fostering programs that tour sights abroad, such as Israel. NCSY offers



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Adina San Solo at HASC

Seniors often choose the same routes as juniors; though, their summers are often cut short by the need to prepare for college or Israel. Senior Adina San Solo aims to imbue her summer with chesed. Adina looks forward to returning for her second summer at Camp HASC, a summer program geared for individuals with special needs and disabilities. She sheds light on what she loves most about Camp HASC: “HASC is described as a place where ‘lives are changed and miracles happen’, and in my experience there, that is true. I’ve watched campers become instantly happy, with a smile bursting through their face just from stepping into HASC. HASC has an unmistakable and unforgettable effect on its campers. More than that, is the positive impact it had on me—it has taught me valuable life lessons, an understanding of the world and the many types of people in it, and has made me discover my passion in life—working with special needs children.”



Today’s teens can choose from a smorgasbord of summer opportunities—programs, jobs, and internships tailored to their individual goals and interests. Indeed, with the right attitude, summer vacation can transcend sun burns and ice cream and instead be a time to pursue hobbies, acquire new skills, and grow religiously. Whatever is on the agenda, students should definitely appreciate the gift that is summer. Three months never fly by faster.

“Just playing in the NFL is a dream come true”

JS: You’re a teammate of quarterback Vince Young. Reports came out months ago that he is not expected back with the franchise. Many insiders have said that Young is not expected to return to the Titans next season. Do you have any inside information on the situation?

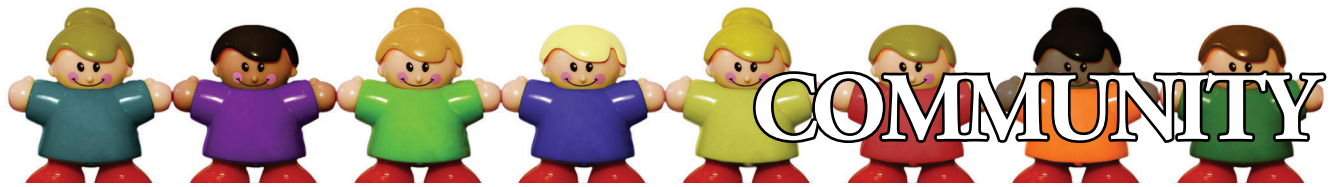
RC: Honestly, I do not. I have no idea. But I would encourage the team to at least take a second look at him. He may not always make textbook plays that look pretty, but he helps us win games. In the NFL, winning every single game you play is your main focus, and Vince is a very good player who has won games for us in the past with a winning percentage way over 500. I hope the best for Vince and I would love to see him back in a Titans uniform next season. But ultimately, I don’t make that decision.

JS: Who is the toughest team to play against?

RC: It’s got to be the Colts. Peyton Manning is a real tough guy to face because he’s just so smart and really understands how to dissect a defense. He makes it pretty hard to beat them.



If you liked this interview, follow me on twitter @NFLJAKESIEGEL. You can also follow Titans LB Rennie Curran @RennieCurran53. We wish Rennie the best of luck and hope to see him become a true “game changer” in the NFL.



Recession, Meet *Chesed*

Shalva Ginsparg ('11)

“The safe way to double your money is to fold it over once and put it in your pocket.” This Frank Hubbard adage may have served spenders in Washington, Wall Street and Main Street well—but now the ship has sailed on that front and the teens of today will be the sailors of tomorrow, forced to steer a sinking vessel out of the maelstrom of debt and deficits. We have swallowed the bitter pill that is the recession, forgone school shabbatonim and summer vacations, have become a little more cognizant of spending habits and a little more wary of the work force that awaits us when we graduate. But these sacrifices pale in comparison to the challenges of the families amongst us who grapple with putting food on the table each week. Fortunately, Tomchei Shabbos provides a life boat for these families and serves as a prime example of the power of Chesed even in these bleak economic times.

**“Tomchei Shabbat
provides a lifeboat for
these families”**

Mrs. Laura Cohen graciously shared her experiences spearheading Tomchei Shabbos within the BRS community. Mrs. Cohen explains, “Tomchei Shabbos is a program run by the Boca Raton Synagogue, that distributes food and supermarket gift cards, to families that are having financial difficulties.” What is perhaps most remarkable about Tomchei Shabbos is the anonymity it extends to beneficiaries. Notes Mrs. Cohen, “Every other week, I arrange for distribution of the food boxes. I am the only one who has any interaction with the members. The program is run with the utmost respect and confidentiality for the families.” Tomchei Shabbos takes extra care to ensure that families are equipped to enjoy Shabbat and Ya-

mim Tovim to the fullest, not an easy feat considering just how pricey holiday season can be.

The belt-tightening and fiscal frugality demanded by the recession may be old news, but the economy’s far-reaching implications within our own Jewish community are sobering. Mrs. Cohen remarks that “We are currently helping 24 families, which is the largest number of recipients that I have had in the 11 years that I have been the coordinator.” The number has jumped from seventeen families these past two years alone. How can teenagers help peers and fellow shul members who are struggling to pay the bills? Says Mrs. Cohen, “Teenagers can help by donating or raising funds for the Tomchei Shabbos program. We spend close to \$100,000 a year on the food and gift cards. Students can also help raise awareness about the fact that there are people in our community who need our help. We can also always use non perishable items such as canned goods or toiletries. These little steps would be in fact a great way to help!” Our economy’s future appears murky at best, but by emulating Mrs. Cohen and her dedication to Tomchei Shabbos perhaps we can ensure smoother sailing for all.

For more information about Tomchei Shabbos in BRS visit brsonline.org

