

that perhaps neglecting *tefillah* is a result of underestimating its power. It is quite disheartening that in a synagogue that I attended recently for Shabbat, the rabbi requested quiet from the congregation more than five times in one service, while there were numerous disruptions resulting from congregants' late arrivals. When I told this story to one *tefillah* symposium attendee, she nodded her head in agreement, informing me that, for a while, she stopped attending shul because she found it too distracting.

While it's wonderful that we pray, Rav Weinberger said, there is nevertheless something missing in our faith in G-d. Until we truly realize that we are capable of communicating with our Creator, we will be unable to pray properly. As the *rav* fervently declared from the lectern, "Daven to G-d in your own language. Make every moment a dialogue with G-d." The audience sat thoughtful and attentive.

It was clear to me that as long as we view prayer as a burdensome, boring, meaningless, and rote ritual, we cannot improve our relationship with G-d. Each rabbi presented a different perspective on this idea. After Rav Weinberger, Rabbi Mayer Twersky, *rosh yeshiva* of RIETS at Yeshiva University, approached the stage and discussed the anomalous nature of prayer, noting that we seem to approach G-d with a laundry list of requests. Rabbi Twersky emphasized the need for prayer in submission to G-d, and reminded the audience that all our needs are dependent on G-d alone, that our *tefillah* should be urgent regardless of what we perceive as an emergency.

"*Kavanah* isn't an optional aspect of prayer," Rabbi Twersky said. "It's crucial. And it's almost impossible to have without proper preparation and meditation. Without *hachanah* (preparation), prayer is guaranteed to be a losing battle." Although we sometimes approach prayer with a "come late, leave early" attitude, prayer cannot be "coasted through," Rabbi Twersky explained. "We need to have an understanding that G-d is right there and we are standing in front of the King of Kings."

Designating adequate time for prayer is difficult when one's schedule is packed. And I'm sure that many college students, like me, are engaged in an ongoing war with their alarm clock. But it's true: immersing oneself in prayer is difficult in a state of sleep deprivation or while hurrying out the door.

The final speaker, Rabbi Eli Mansour of Congregation Bet Yaakov of Brooklyn, introduced the concept of prayer as a device not only to request new things, but to sustain the already existent blessings in one's life; and to sustain one's own existence. "The Jewish people as a nation have survived through prayer," Rabbi Mansour declared.

Listening to three insightful presentations on prayer and witnessing the passion and commitment demonstrated by such a strong turnout at a Sunday-morning symposium, I felt renewed, relieved, hopeful, and encouraged—eager to embrace and promote the attitude that *tefillah* is an opportunity; it is the Jewish people's most powerful tool on an individual and collective level; not burdensome, but empowering. One symposium attendee told me that he often contemplates the idea of "being G-d's child" as a premise to meaningful prayer and reflection about its magnitude.

tion about its magnitude.

I understand that the OU will be going to many communities in the Metropolitan New York area with a variety of speakers to underscore the importance of a greater understanding and appreciation of our *tefillah*, which will only lead to a stronger connection with G-d.

Tefillah is the way in which we maintain a relationship with G-d and cope with the anxieties of life, "sharing" our burdens with Him, so to speak. Without preparation, concentration, and consistency, we cannot maximize our prayer. As a young adult, I feel blessed as I am in a unique position to establish meaningful *tefillah* as part of my daily life, and to carry it over into my adult life as well.

Rachael B. Goldberg is a senior at Stern College. ❖

YU Accepts All Four Honors Program Applicants From Rambam

Jacob Bernstein, Jonathan Drory, Shmuel Herzberg, and Gavriel Novick successfully undertook the rigorous Yeshiva University Honors Program application process and were rewarded on Monday,



Rosh Mesivta Zev Meir Friedman, Principal Yotav Eliach, and Associate Principal Peretz Hochbaum congratulate the future YU honors students at Rambam.

December 14, with notices that they had been accepted to the prestigious program.

The Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program at Yeshiva College challenges outstanding students to reach their full potential. The program stresses critical analysis, creativity, cultural enrichment, research, individual mentoring, and both oral and written communication skills. Students who fulfill all of the honors program requirements have the honors distinction noted on their transcripts and receive special diplomas

with the honors program designation.

The program requires a minimum GPA of 90 and at least 1270 combined score in critical reasoning and mathematics on their SATs. The four Rambam seniors greatly exceeded those requirements. Among them, the GPAs ranged from 96.26 to 101.21 and combined SAT scores from 1390 to 1490. They had to submit letters of recommendation from faculty members or school officials, write an essay, and be

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AROUND THE FIVE TOWNS

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interviewed by YU admissions officials. Their educational careers at Rambam have been extremely challenging, marked with many honors and advanced placement courses. All four also had an extensive list of extracurricular activities ranging from academic to athletic teams, and out-of-school activities including tutoring and advanced scientific research.

Rabbi Murray Sragow, YU associate director of undergraduate admissions, thanked *Rosh Hamesivta Zev Meir Friedman*, Principal Yotav Eliach, and Associate Principal Peretz Hochbaum for sending the university “four extremely well qualified candidates... We are excited at the prospect of continuing the work that you have done with these wonderful students. These students will be leaders of the Jewish community in the next generation, and we are honored to be part of their education. We wish you many years of continued pride from all these outstanding students.” ❖

Have a Ha Ha Havdalah! At Chabad, January 9

Chabad of the Five Towns invites everyone to enjoy a night on the town including kosher food and kosher comedy—you can *daven* there too if you want—all at the Jean Fischman Chabad Center, 74 Maple Avenue in Cedarhurst. Enjoy the comedic stylings of Marc Weiner as he discusses “Kiddush—the Ultimate Battleground.”

In this funny and delightfully insightful look into becoming a traditional Jew,

General Schwarzkopf teaches survival techniques for eating at the *kiddush*. Marc tells funny stories and uses uproariously funny and inventive Jewish props to keep everyone laughing. The *New York Times* calls Marc Weiner “a gifted comic,” and many may recognize him from his shows on Nickelodeon and his spots on *Saturday Night Live*, *Comic Strip Live*, *Comedy Central*, and many other shows.

The evening begins at 8:30 p.m. with a Chinese buffet. Admission is \$25 per person. Reservations are appreciated. Call 516-295-2478 or visit www.chabad5towns.com. ❖

Bnot Shulamith Joins Science Revolution

Magnets, Matter, and Man-eating Plants—that’s only the beginning of the powerful push at Bnot Shulamith to encourage interest and ability in science education. The push is against the tide of research findings that show girls are far less interested in science by the time they reach eighth grade, compared to eighth grade boys. A new science program in Bnot Shulamith elementary school is a step in the right direction to reverse the trend.

This September, veteran educator Mrs. Andrea Borah joined the elementary school faculty as the elementary school science coordinator. Her “rolling science lab” goes from classroom to classroom in a unique effort to expand and enhance the science curriculum in Bnot Shulamith’s first through fourth grades. The rolling lab program is part of an increasing, across-the-board emphasis in Bnot Shulamith to give the girls a signifi-



Bnot Shulamith fourth-grade students exploring electromagnetic circuitry.

cant advantage in science studies.

“It’s never too early to help the girls develop a sense of curiosity about science,” says Mrs. Borah. “The Bnot Shulamith program is unique because of its focus on the earliest grades,” she says. “When the girls have a chance to actually do the experiments themselves, they’re boosting their knowledge, skills, and confidence in science.”

The rolling science lab schedule and activities are connected to weekly classroom science units, and conform to the current New York State science curriculum. In each lab session, Mrs. Borah groups students into small teams to perform hands-on, age appropriate experiments and answer

related questions.

During a trip to the Queen’s Farm Museum this November, Bnot Shulamith’s first grade was shocked to discover that pumpkins float despite their enormous size. Back in school, the girls dissected a pumpkin to study its various parts and count the seeds, before recording their findings in “leaf books” and charts.

The third graders directed their attention to a considerably lighter matter. Or, perhaps not... During a science lab session devoted to exploring the properties of gas and air, using balloons and scales, the girls discovered that air, which appears to be weightless, is actually quite heavy!

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