

THE JEWISH STAR

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WWW.THEJEWISHSTAR.COM

Popular website now forbidden The truth behind the ban

By Michael Orbach

For many in the Orthodox community, it seemed only a matter of time before the quasi-risque news aggregator known as Vos Iz Neias was banned. On Dec. 22, a kol ko-reh, literally a public announcement, written in Hebrew, was posted in Williamsburg and Borough Park forbidding advertisers and Internet users from visiting the site.

The notice, signed by 36 prominent char-die rabbinical figures, warned that the dangers of the Internet were "already known and publicized," and that only those with explicit permission could use it. However, the letter continued, "Satan has found a way."

"A site exists on the Internet known as 'Vos Iz Neias,' as if it were founded only to spread news of the Jewish world," the letter stated. "Yet it contains a hidden ambush — in the news, it includes stories and events of the corrupt, abominable and lowly. It is full of tumah (impurity), filth, foul language; lashon hora (slander), gossip and embarrassments of Torah scholars; it also brings forth libel and slander regarding individuals and organizations dedicated to Torah ... It also writes against officers and politicians under whose favor we live, to ruin their reputation; the disgrace of G-d's name is terrible and mighty."

The letter continued that individuals and organizations were prohibited from advertising or working with the site since it "enables the wicked and assists evildoers." Readers were told not to buy from those who advertise on the site. The ban concluded by repeating that using the Internet was forbidden except for business purposes. The response was

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Photos courtesy Elliot Steinmetz

Team USA at the 2010 Maccabi Australia Games. Above: the team after winning the gold. Above right: MTA's Yisrael Feld speeding past defenders. Lower right: HAFTR's Shelby Rosenberg nailing a fade-away jumper in the final game of the tournament.



Bringing home the gold

Orthodox students take top prize at Maccabi Australia Games

By Michael Orbach

Team USA brought home the gold from the 2010 Maccabi Australia 18-and-under basketball tournament. And the squad did it while wearing yarmulkes.

For the first time, the majority of the American team was composed of Orthodox Jewish students. The team was formed when

the Maccabi organization contacted Elliot Steinmetz, an associate general counsel at Arbor Realty Trust and a former coach for HANC. Steinmetz runs the website Jewishhoopsamerica.com, which covers Jewish high school basketball around the country. Using the contacts from the site, he quickly assembled a team of 10 featuring the top yeshiva league players. He already knew

the two best: Shelby Rosenberg of HAFTR and Yisrael Feld of Yeshiva University's High School for Boys, also known as MTA.

The rest of the players came from all over the country: David Markush, from Los Angeles; Aaron Zuckerman, from Maryland; Richie Mishan, a student at Rutgers, played in the yeshiva league for the Yeshiva of Flatbush.

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Shabbat Candlelighting: 4:25 p.m. Shabbat ends 5:30 p.m. 72 minute zman 5:57 p.m. Torah Reading Parshat Bo

THE JEWISH STAR



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Photo courtesy Abby Marks

DRS Helps Yad Eliezer

In the aftermath of last week's blizzard, Yad Sarah volunteer Anshel Klein of Cedarhurst couldn't access the garage where he'd stored a variety of used medical equipment to ship to Israel. He enlisted the help of Rabbi Kaminetsky, principal at DRS Yeshiva High for Boys, who dispatched students to clear a path for the truck arriving to collect the load. The items will become part of Yad Sarah's nationwide Medical Equipment Lending Center. For more information, visit www.friendsofyadsarah.org or call 212.223.7758.



Jason Fruchter with HAFTR High School principal Naomi Lippman on Jan. 4.

HAFTR senior takes bronze at Maccabi Games

By The Jewish Star Staff

HAFTR High school senior Jason Fruchter took home the bronze medal for doubles in tennis at this year's Maccabi Australia games.

Fruchter, 17, is currently ranked at number two on Long Island in the United States Tennis Association. The Maccabi Australia games had him playing against players across the age spectrum.

"I got to meet Jews from all over the country and play a sport I love," he told *The Jewish Star*.

In the singles match, Fruchter lost a close game in the quarter finals with a Hofstra college student who eventually managed to place fourth in the competition. Undaunted, the next day Fruchter played hard in the doubles matches to seize the bronze with his partner.

This is the second medal Fruchter has won at the Maccabi games. As a freshman, he took the silver medal in the Argentina Maccabi games. Fruchter along with the fellow HAFTR senior, Shelby Rosenberg, was one of several religious Jews at the Maccabi games.

Fruchter said he's learned something from the experience.

"I learned that there are Jews, they may not be religious but they recognize they're Jews," he said.

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The truth behind the ban on Vos Iz Neias

Continued from page 1

an almost immediate chaotic flamewar that engulfed the Jewish blogosphere. Shmarya Rosenberg of the Failed Messiah blog was the first to post the ban. The website Matzav.com pounced on the kol koreh two days after it was published. Harry Maryles of the blog Emes V'Emunah defended the site on the Zev Brenner talk show and received a phone call that implied his site was about to be banned.

"Is this what Jewish leadership has come to?" Mayles asked in a post. "Mafia style intimidation tactics?"

A contributor to Matzav.com, Rabbi Gavriel Rivlin, attacked Maryles on the site. Rosenberg named Shimon Weiser, a Satmar Chasid, as the proponent of the ban and also wrote that Matzav and Pinchos Lipshutz may have been a force involved in it. Asher Lipner of the Jewish Board of Advocates claimed that Vos Iz Neias was banned because of their coverage of sexual abuse inside the Charedi community. A post on The Five Towns Jewish Times, attributed to the non-existent American Israel Press Service, alleged that the ban was the work of members of the Satmar community associated with Brooklyn politician Vito Lopez and that the signers of the ban didn't really know what they were signing. Matzav, in response, defended the signers.

"After rumors were spread questioning the veracity of the kol korei, we conducted our own private investigation and found all such claims to be completely false," said Yossi Schneider, an editor at Matzav.com. "Claims of political agendas and the like being the motivating factor behind the kol korei were found to be totally untrue. The rabbonim,

after reviewing various egregious transgressions of the site in question, felt a strong need to take a stand against the site and felt that the way to go about it would be to address the advertisers."

Matzav also featured a letter from the Executive Director of the Rofea Cholim Cancer Society, Yosef Gordon, who pulled his advertisements from Vos Iz Neias.

"After a personal conversation with the RCCS Rabbinical Chairman, the Novominskier Rebbe shlit'a, he unequivocally told me that he signed the aforementioned Kol Koreh," Gordon wrote. "As a result RCCS will no longer patronize the Vos Iz Neias site unless and until permission is granted by those Rabbanim."

That post was taken down. A spokesperson for Matzav said that the action was taken down since the post was made without the authorization of the board of the organization and made in the "zeal to what he considered an affront to Gedolei Torah."

The post on the Five Towns Jewish Times site was taken down as well. Larry Gordon, its publisher, did not respond to comments.

Other bloggers, like Heshy Fried of Frum Satire, found humor in the situation. "Everyone knew that [Vos Iz Neias's] sole purpose was to show how foolish the frum community looked when it tried to formulate opinions," Fried wrote.

Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetsky, who signed the ban, said he was not familiar with the site but was given the ban by Rabbi Malkiel Kotler, of Lakewood.

"I know very little about it, but I relied on the rabbanim that signed it and they said it's

terrible," Rabbi Kamenetsky told The Jewish Star. "They said it has a lot of lashon hora."

Rabbi Malkiel Kotler could not be reached in time for The Jewish Star's deadline. Rabbi Yaakov Perlow declined to comment.

Shimon Weiser, who identified himself as one of the proponents of the ban, offered a simple reason for the ban.

"I couldn't stand that the heimish called yiddishe website became a distribution for shmutz," said Weiser, using the Yiddish word for dirt. "It's as simple as that."

As an example, he listed the case of Israel Weingarten, a rabbi from Monsey who was found guilty of molesting his daughter.

"Every day of the trial Vos Iz Neias brought down the newspapers, the exact testimony," he said referring to the graphic nature of the case. "When you're reading the goyish papers you know going into the site that that's what they sell. But if you're going to a heimish Shomer Shabbos website, it doesn't belong there, it's as simple as that."

However, Weiser stressed that the ban had nothing to do with specifically featuring sexual abuse cases on the site, or with Vito Lopez.

"It's a vicious lie to say such a stupid thing that there was an agenda," he said. "We showed the rabbonim. I have a whole list of articles going back a whole year. [The gedolim] were shocked that a yiddish website with a frum name should be poisoning the minds of the young, old, and the bochurim."

Weiser said that he and several others had given a warning to the owners of the site about their content in January 2010, well before Lopez was associated with the scandals.

Yair Hoffman, who writes for both Vos Iz Neias and the Five Towns Jewish Times, and was the source of the information for the American Israel Press Service, said that the ban was filed under a mistaken impression.

"When I contacted some of the Roshei yeshiva who signed on the ban I was told that the organizers had made efforts to speak to Vos Iz Neias through me and that I had rebuffed them," Hoffman explained. "This was not true, I never rebuffed them. I told them ... in the name of Vos Iz Neias that they would respond to any hazmana with their representative according to shulchan aruch. This exchange was misrepresented to those who signed the ban."

Weiser denied Hoffman's account.

"All the rabbonim were shown, no one was forced and no one is backing out," he said adding that he was surprised that Hoffman had not contacted him. "We don't want them to close down, we want them to behave."

Some have argued that the ban reflects poorly on the signatories.

"Websites need to have standards that follow the Torah and meet their audiences' needs," said Rabbi Gil Student, the managing editor of OU Press and the author of the popular Hirhurim website. "This ban is an attempt to pressure a website to meet such a standard. However, the public, myself included, has become skeptical about the authenticity and process of bans. Even if this ban forces Vos Iz Neias to shut down or change, it will have also driven further away an increasingly frustrated and untrusting public."

Bringing home the gold

Continued from page 1

The team flew on Dec. 21 and held its first practice after they arrived on Dec. 23. While most of the other teams in the competition had been practicing for months, members of the American team had met one another hours before on the plane ride.

"We had literally two and a half hours [of practice]," Steinmetz said.

In the first game, the team played Australia. According to Feld, the game was "rough" until halftime and the score was close. No one knew what to expect from the team.

"I didn't know what the competition was going to be like," said Joey Hoenig, coach of HAFTR, where Rosenberg plays. "But with Shelby Rosenberg and Feld ... They're the two best players to play in the league in a long time."

After halftime, the American team hit a stride and it wasn't much of a game. Team USA coasted to an easy victory, 80-61.

While the Maccabi Games are open to Israelis and Jewish citizens, the number of religious Jews who play in the Maccabi Games is small, according to Steinmetz. That made the team's wins, a cluster of bobbing yarmulkes flying down the basketball court, all the more surprising. Steinmetz recalled that he kept on hearing people exclaim, "I can't believe the yarmulke kid dunked!"

Steinmetz, who is Orthodox, ensured that the players stayed with Orthodox families and that food was provided by a kosher caterer. Touring was done on Shabbos, so the religious players opted out. Some of the non-religious players wanted to opt out as well in solidarity.

The next few days were a whirlwind of victories as the American team dominated the competition. It destroyed the Israel team,



69-30, before defeating a non-Jewish Sydney all-star team, the Comets, 88-73.

Feld scored an average of 30 points per game. As a guard who stands over six feet, Feld may actually be the best player in the Yeshiva league. As a sophomore, he was the first student in a decade to make the MTA varsity basketball team; he scored his 1,000th point earlier this year.

"He's a six-foot guard, he shoots at the three-point-line off the dribble and he's pretty unstoppable by the basket," said Daniel Gibber, coach of the MTA Lions. "He's a good ballplayer and a better kid."

Feld credited his success to the rest of his teammates.

"It makes my job easier when you got really good players to play with," Feld said. "They couldn't focus on everyone."

Rosenberg averaged 25 points a game with rebounds in the double digits.

"He's the nicest kid I've ever coached. Intelligent," said Hoenig. "A nice all-around kid

and that's more important than basketball, though basketball counts."

After a rematch with the Comets that Team USA won in overtime, the squad moved to the championships versus Australia, its initial opponent.

Steinmetz said that the only thrill of the game was when one of the team's youngest players, who had not scored a point during the tournament, was fouled at the final buzzer. He took two foul shots and managed to hit one.

"It was like the last second of a one-point game," Steinmetz said.

When he made the shot, Steinmetz said, the team went wild.

The point, though, didn't much matter as the final score was 97-80.

Both Feld and Rosenberg said they believed the event had been a kiddush Hashem, a sanctification of G-d's name.

"We were respectful and that definitely helped," Rosenberg said. "We wore our kip-



Photos courtesy Elliot Steinmetz

Above: Shelby Rosenberg on a jumper. Left: Aaron Zuckerman blocks a shot.

pot to show our pride and we won."

"People were surprised that kids with yarmulkes were able to play," said Feld. "People were surprised we were able to win — everyone wore a yarmulke."

The trip ended at the Sydney airport, with the players exchanging contact information with one another and making plans to get together again. Rosenberg and Feld helped another Jewish player put on tefilin in the airport for the first time in four years.

For more photos visit www.thejewishstar.com

Opinion

A good sport for all seasons

I looked forward to the championship game for weeks. I was an athlete growing up and I still enjoy physical activity, but much to my husband's dismay, I have never appreciated the role of spectator in sport. Admittedly, I would really like to like to watch. I imagine it would be great to share a pastime so enjoyable for my husband and now my boys, but even after a bar mitzvah's worth of years in marriage, I've yet to come around.

So defensively, I was philosophical, trying to explain my lack of interest, my inability to find a good sport to enjoy watching. How can you root for what is essentially a uniform and rotating people in a stadium? I "get" watching a game in the last quarter, the bottom of a ninth inning, but to my own frustration, find it near impossible to care from start to finish or season to season. But to every rule there is an exception. And as

it turns out, I am an avid, devoted and entirely attentive hockey fan. My adrenaline races like I am on the court myself. Heart pounding, I find myself reaching for water to quench parched lips, feel myself sinking to the bleachers in disappointment at a missed opportunity and I cheer too loudly, hooting

and roaring with every goal in my team's favor.

My passion is not for Rangers or Devils, but rather for a locally sponsored field hockey team. Set in the dank, smelly gym of an all-boys yeshiva high school, this is hockey played with an orange ball, not a puck, smacked around by little boys wearing tzitzit under their dress-length jerseys. This junior league floor hockey is played in three periods by the fourth and fifth graders in town.

This year, my fourth grader played a respectable defense all season and the family eagerly anticipated the championship game. Though not a rough and tumble type of boy, our eldest is a natural athlete and we wondered whether hockey would suit him at the start of the season. He quickly became a valuable member of the defensive line.

For the championship, his team would play the undefeated contenders. We knew there would be breathless moments, sweaty helmets, the newly beloved kosher Gatorade and a trophy at the end of the day. But would there be cheer or disappointment?

His siblings and two sets of grandparents joined us for the game. I adore that my son has this enthusiastic crowd of fans cheering for him. And despite our cheers, we found ourselves down 5 to 1 as the final buzzer rang in the overcrowded gym. I worried how my son and his team would take such a loss after having been on a winning team all season. The first place trophies gleamed in their boxes on the sidelines, towering over the second place trophies.

The game had been rough. Players growled and stomped their feet in disappointment. One of the more talented players struggled to keep his temper in check. He banged his stick and gnashed his teeth and shed tears of exhaustion and exertion as the game ended. Some parents gathered to complain about a bad call while grandparents high in the bleachers whispered about a reported thirteen-year-old on the winning team. Both teams were called to the floor for trophies. Our son walked away with one of the 2010 second-place champion trophies as did every member of his team.

If he was disappointed not to have received an MVP or notable player trophy, he did not let on. Back at home, he showered off the sweat and the game, and sat down to watch the Jets play. As the announcers droned on, I zoned out of the game and in on my guy, at ease, relaxing, hockey behind him. He had not uttered a single complaint. No bitter regret. He did not shed one tear. He had played well. It was his personal best game and he knew it. He was proud and smiled gently when my husband praised him. Our nine-year-old was proud to have played

on a championship team and was now happy to be home with his family, watching another team play another game far off in TV land. I marveled that he had managed such a passion during the game yet left it on the field. Before getting into bed, he carefully set his

trophy atop his dresser and opened a book to read.

Earlier in the week we had asked if he wanted to play next season and he nodded. I eagerly await those games, a new team, a new oversized jersey, new competition and the confidence that I see comes from playing and practicing, from rescuing a ball from behind a net and belonging to a team.

True to his nature on and off the court, my little hockey player speaks softly and carries a big stick — wielding the power that comes with reserve, control and a gentle and kind

nature.

And I am psyched to have discovered a good sport that my husband and I can enjoy watching together, season after season.

Ilya Welfed, stops to cherish the chaos, writing about balancing work, life and religion for The Jewish Star. Email her at ilyawelfed@gmail.com.

IN MY VIEW



Ilya Welfed

Breathless moments, sweaty helmets and the newly beloved kosher Gatorade... But would there be cheer or disappointment?

Ask Aviva

Overwhelmed at home, while hubby is at work

Dear Aviva,

My husband works two jobs — both of equal importance. This is to allow us to have a stable financial household and allows me to stay at home with my young children, which is very important to me. However, due to his very tight and very busy schedule, it leaves little time for him to help around the house. Most of the housework — cleaning, laundry, feeding and bathing the kids, falls on me. I literally feel like I am drowning in it all, but I feel too guilty to ask my husband to pitch in more since he's providing the financial end. How can I ask him to chip in here and there to help save my sanity? And on the flip side, why can't I handle it all?

—SAHM

Dear SAHM,

Okay, at first I thought you were calling yourself "Sam," all in caps, and with an "H" thrown in. Then I realized that this must be an acronym for something (hence the caps). So I mulled it over and gave it my best shot — I figured it was "Stay At Home Mom" and then I Googled it just to be sure. Well, the first thing that came up was "The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine." But the second thing that came up was a website with tips for "Stay At Home Moms." Bingo! You're not Sam. And unless there's some-



thing major that you're not telling me about, (like a medical degree), you are not a member of The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine. You are a Stay At Home Mom!

Why am I taking up this article to tell everyone how I didn't know what SAHM was? Why couldn't I have just said "SAHM means Stay At Home Mom?" Well, this tells us that you are aware of the websites that give female homemakers tips and support. And according to me, this little bit of info is a double-edged sword.

This tells me that you feel like you belong to a subgroup, which is good. And it also tells

me that you have access to all of the 213,000 websites that dispense tips to your subgroup of SAHMs. All this access within just 0.19 seconds of searching for SAHM tips on Google.

But this can be bad for you because it means that you have all this near-infinite access all day long, without anybody looking over your shoulder. This could get out of hand.

Relax, I'm not implying that you should join a support group for frum people who struggle with internet pornography. But I have noticed a trend among stay-at-home moms to lose their time on facebook, youtube, and checking out Zappos without any intent to purchase. (Or worse, being compelled to purchase.) Unfortunately, clocking in your hours on Youtube and Facebook isn't damaging enough to warrant a support group. But in my opinion, these seemingly innocuous sites can be very damaging for a person who has a real addiction to social networking and the like.

I know I am jumping to conclusions with you and your internet use. I also know (first-hand) how difficult it is to be disciplined in an unstructured environment. If this resonates with you, you may want to get one of those programs that kick you offline once you reach a certain number of minutes within a certain period of time.

Now, on to the family stuff. You kinda

confused me before when you said that you handle the housework. You listed some things that I didn't know were considered housework. Check your letter and see if you can find what I'm talking about. Give up? Well, I'll tell you, but you'll have to know it for the midterm. Here it is: Feeding and bathing children are not under the umbrella of housework. We actually put that under the heading of — can you guess? — that's right, "Parenting." So while hubby is making the dough and you're baking the dough, you are actually equal business partners when it comes to your merger of offspring. Obviously, he can't feed kids if he's not home. But when he is home, enlist him to take over with the parenting.

If you can afford it, you may want to hire some help for the real housework. Even just once a week can make a difference. If you're still overwhelmed, it's time to re-evaluate this arrangement. We don't want your kids' main caregiver to be a stressed-out frazzle-bag. And SAHM, don't Google "frazzle-bag." It's not really the clinical term.

— Aviva

Aviva Rizel is a Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice who can be reached at AvivaRizel.MFT@gmail.com.

January 8

Concert at Chabad

CHABAD OF THE FIVE TOWNS will be hosting Boruch Sholom, one of the most popular finalists of the "Jewish Star" singing competition. A random door prize will be an iPod Touch and the evening will also feature a full dairy buffet. There is a \$25 admission fee and RSVP is appreciated. Please call 516-295-2478 or visit www.chabad5towns.com to reserve your spot.

Chinese Auction

THE YESHIVA OF FLATBUSH will hold a Cirque De La Vie Chinese Auction at Shaare Zion Congregation, located at 2030 Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn, at 8 p.m.. \$18 per person and free \$20 coupon with each paid admission. Place your order online at www.yofauction.org. For further information contact 718-377-4040 ext. 149

January 12

Tu B'Shevat Story time

Chabad of the Five Towns, located at 74 Maple Avenue in Cedarhurst, will hold a children's story time for children ages 4-7.

"Tu B'Shevat stories will be read. Crafts & puppets, what a treat snacks & juice you will be fed, say shema and you will be ready for bed."

At 5:30-6:30 p.m. Call Hadassah at 516-295-2478 *20 RSVP appreciated

January 13

Farbrengen

CHABAD OF THE FIVE TOWNS will be holding a Farbrengen Dinner for men and women at the Chabad House at 8:15 p.m to commemorate the day the late Lubavitch Rebbe assumed leadership of the movement. Farbrengen will be led by Rabbi Yossi Paltiel, Director of Inside Chassidus. For further information & reservations call 516-295-2478 or visit www.chabad5towns.com.

January 15

Speaker at Beth Sholom

CONGREGATION BETH SHOLOM, located at 390 Broadway in Lawrence, will host Rabbi Saul Berman as a scholar in residence on Shabbat, January 15. Rabbi Berman will speak at 11 a.m. on the topic of "Why do we bless children with Birkat Kohanim?" and at 4:30 p.m. on the topic of

ON THE Calendar

Submit your shul or organization's events or shiurim to jscalendar@thejewishstar.com.
Deadline is Wednesday of the week prior to publication.



Courtesy Shalhevet

Shalhevet girls stuff for a cause

Students at Midreshet Shalhevet's chesed club spent two weeks stuffing teddy bears to be presented as gifts to children who are transported by Hatzalah. The students also attached a tag to each toy stating the name of the animal, and its favorite food and color.

"A study in self-definition: the weekday Amidah."

Rabbi Berman is on the faculty of Stern College and Columbia Law School. Rabbi Berman has extensively contributed to women's Jewish education, to the role of social ethics in Synagogue life and the understanding of the applicability of Jewish Law to contemporary society.

OU Chairman of the Board Harvey Blitz with panelists Jerry Silverman and Rabbi Herschel Bilet; and Rabbi Shaul Robinson.

The Convention will bring to a close the six-year OU presidency of Stephen J. Savitsky, with the installation of his successor. An announcement will be made prior to the Convention of who will follow Mr. Savitsky as the chief lay leader of the OU. The entire slate of OU Officers and Board members will be elected at the Convention. It will also be the first Convention at which Rabbi Weil is Executive Vice President. Both he and Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, now Executive Vice President, Emeritus, will play leading roles in the programming and learning sessions.

The Convention will conclude with a gala dinner at which the OU's new leadership will be installed.

For further information, including costs, and to register for the Convention, go to www.ou.org/convention or Frank Buchweitz, Convention Co-Director, at frank@ou.org, or 212-613-8188.

January 16

OU Conference

THE ORTHODOX UNION will be holding its "One Day Conference on Jewish Life" at The Hilton in Woodcliff, New Jersey. The Convention will be divided into three tracks and two plenaries from 10 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. Participants will be able to choose five sessions with presentations by Rabbi Moshe Elefant and Rav Hershel Schachter of the OU; Dr. Shira Weiss, Rebbetzin Yael Weil, Rebbetzin Rookie Bilet, Rabbi Dr. Edward Reichman, Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman, Rabbi Dovid Fohrman;

January 19

Job search

THE FRIEDBERG JCC, located at 15 Neil Court in Oceanside will be holding a panel presentation on "Conducting a Successful Job Search in this Competitive Market" with four certified career coaches. The panel will begin at 10 a.m. and is free. For more information call 516-634-4010 or via email at plerner@friedbergjcc.org

January 23

Hatseller and the Monkeys

THE MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE - A LIVING MEMORIAL TO THE HOLOCAUST, located at 36 Battery Place in New York City, welcomes families for The Hatseller and the Monkeys, a special Tu B'Shevat program for families featuring storytelling, songs, and arts and crafts that celebrate the New Year of Trees.

Following the performance, children are invited for holiday-themed craft activities. This program is for children ages 3 to 10. Tickets are available online at www.mjhnyc.org or by calling the Museum box office at 646.437.4202.

Ongoing Support group

THE JCC OF THE GREATER FIVE TOWNS will sponsor a new support group for the economically challenged as a result of the economic downturn. Key themes will include unemployment, financial issues, empowerment and support. Please join us on Thursday mornings at 10:15am at Temple Israel, 140 Central Ave, Lawrence until January 20th. This group is part of Connect to Care, an initiative funded by UJA-Federation of NY. For further information and to pre-register, please contact Talia Rapps, L.M.S.W. at (516) 569-6733 x213.

Calling all Senior Song Birds

THE JCC OF THE GREATER FIVE TOWNS, located at 270 Grove Avenue in Cedarhurst, hosts a choir for seniors every Tuesday morning at 11 a.m. for a joyful hour of singing with choir master Zvi Klein. We sing songs in all languages and we perform for local venues. There is a \$5.00 optional contribution requested per session. For information please call Sheryl at (516) 569-6733 x 222.

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The Kosher Bookworm

You do have a prayer

What are the halachos (laws) of Jewish prayer? This is the topic of a new book jointly published by Yeshivat Hat Eztion, the Orthodox Union and Ktav Publishing. Titled, "Hilchot Tefillah: A comprehensive guide to the laws of daily prayer," the book lives up to its august title.

Based on Yeshivat Har Etzion's famed Virtual Beit Medrash and written by Rabbi David Brofsky, this comprehensive work of more than 300 pages delivers a detailed compendium of Jewish law that covers just about every facet of the daily observance in Jewish prayer.

Starting with the washing of hands upon waking, this work goes into detail describing every nuance of practice, their origin, and at times, their rationale. Each major prayer is dealt with in a way that will enable even the most casual reader to better understand the basis of Jewish prayer and give true meaning for those who previously found the synagogue service to be boring.

By explaining the purpose of ritual, Rabbi Brofsky makes it possible for us to better practice and understand such previously misunderstood rituals and situations such as what constitutes kavanah during the Shema, the deeper meaning behind Shemonah Es-

reh, maintaining kavanah during prayer and avoiding distractions.

Also of interest are the reasons behind the personalization of prayer, praying in the vernacular, personal requests and alternatives to the Amidah. The text of the Amidah itself is also given great scrutiny.

Communal prayer is dealt with in the context of the role of the chazzan, the repetition of the Amidah, the proper recitation of the Kedushah, Modim, and Modim De-Rabbanan.

While this work does not contain a bibliography and footnotes, its sources are contained within the main body of the text, thus enabling the reader to pursue further study of this subject.

The author of this work, Rabbi Brofsky has taught Talmud and Jewish Law for many years at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Alon Shevut and at Mevaseret in Jerusalem. Rabbi Brofsky is an alumni of YU and his website on the Virtual Beit Medrash is read by thousands of devoted readers worldwide and is the premier Halachic web-resource today.

Prior to this great book, the Orthodox Union produced a related title, "Making Our Tefillot More Personal and Meaningful," a collection of 28 articles that had previously appeared in Jewish Action magazine.

Taken together, these two books will most certainly help enhance both the Jewish worshiper in the service and the atmosphere of the synagogue. This work contain a valuable bibliography listing 20 high quality works on Jewish prayer for your edification.



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434259

The Kosher Critic

Great food, no pretensions

By Zechariah Mehler

Like any other medium food can be art. The chef is an artist, forming a harmonious amalgam of components to create flavors that excite the palate. Thanks to the growing number of gourmet restaurants and the tireless work of the Food Network more and more people are accepting food as an artistic medium; people expect fancier and more bizarre foods as part of their culinary repertoire. The upside of this is that the market has become saturated (often in a good way) by high-end eateries serving food that utilize the finest ingredients to make specialized dishes. The downside of this saturation is the same problem that occurs in any artistic medium: people jump on the bandwagon, otherwise known as the rise of culinary hackery.

Think for a moment and you'll see what I mean. That fancy restaurant you tried the last time you were on a date or with your spouse; the candlelit pottery barn-styled room where you were served dishes that you couldn't pronounce. When the food came you tried it, but something was missing. You couldn't put your finger on it, but it seemed that you were eating a pale imitation of something you saw in a better restaurant and here, on your plate, sat a passionless pastiche.

Recently I was eating at Ima, a quiet little restaurant unobtrusively nestled among the other Jewish stores on Cedar Lane in Teaneck. Ima Restaurant is a Kurdish- Iraqi restaurant with a heavy Israeli accent. Being an adventurous eater I love restaurants like Ima because they give me a chance to eat regionally authentic and exceptionally unique food. What Ima specializes in is kubbeh, a Middle Eastern croquette, filled with meat, vegetables and bulgur. I dove into the menu trying each type of kubbeh offered. The ones eaten hors d'oeuvre style were light and airy. Their fillings were rich and carried an array of flavors, compliments of spices that are shipped directly from Israel. The other kubbeh is served as dumplings in several kinds of soup. These soups range from a simple, yet delicious, vegetable to the much more daring Kubeh Shwanderia made from beets. I will admit that I am usually not a fan of beets but the Kubeh Shwanderia was fantastic. It was sweet and sour with just a hint of kick and the addition of the light kubbeh dumpling made the whole dish really meld together. For the main I tried the stuffed vegetables, and I mean all of the stuffed vegetables. Grape leaves, zucchini, eggplant, peppers, tomatoes and beets — all stuffed with rice and meat and then cooked in a tomato based sauce. These vegetables were tender, flavorful and, quite simply, magnificent.

As I sat enjoying my desert, a cookie filled with dates and walnuts called Maamul, I could not help but notice that Ima's had no sushi bar; there had been no aioli of any kind on my food and the beef I had eaten was neither Kobe nor Wagyu. Despite that, the meal I was eating at Ima's was one of the best I had eaten in a long time. It reminded me that often times the best food is the kind made

without pretension. Ima is the kind of restaurant that is the result of a passion for the food they cook and the desire to share that passion. It's not the sort of place that you go to looking for decorated plates and Iron Chef-style dishes. It's the kind of place you go for comfort food and to remind yourself that sometimes food doesn't need to be fancy to be amazing.

Zechariah Mehler is a widely published food writer and expert in social marketing. Follow him on Twitter @thekoshercritic



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About Rubashkin

You only know that you're a Jewish editor when someone compares you to Adolph Hitler.

The cover story of last week's issue of The Jewish Star, "Shining a light on Iowa," about a rally held on behalf of Sholom Rubashkin, the imprisoned former executive vice president of Agriprocessors, certainly struck a nerve. We received a number of letters; some were effusive, others were not. Some said that the article portrayed the event fairly and provided a much-needed perspective, others criticized the Star for a number of reasons. A single mother of five wrote to us to explain that the Rubashkin family had always been there for her, no matter what they needed. Others, like Yaacov Gross raised valid concerns in our letters page about the priorities we as a community should have. Others, as stated at the outset, compared us to Hitler. One memorable phone call told us that we should enjoy our 120 years in this world, since the next world would not be so pleasant for us.

We thought we would take this opportunity to address some of the complaints raised about the article.

One paragraph that received special mention was the one that dealt

with the assorted crimes of which the extended Rubashkin clan was found guilty of committing.

We did not intend to imply that because his family was found guilty of committing crimes, that he is also guilty. However, we felt that there was a need to convey the information and that it was relevant to the topic at hand. Had the rally been about any other criminal, Jewish or non-Jewish, we would have listed the same information. The relevance of Rubashkin's son-in-law, Yaakov Weiss, having served time for child molestation was especially important, given that his wife, Roza, robo-called the Five Towns to encourage people to attend a rally that criticized the justice system, the same system that enabled her husband, who committed an unpardonable crime, to only serve a 60-day sentence.

That isn't really the point though. Whether their actions imply guilt on Rubashkin himself is entirely irrelevant. There is no need to imply guilt on Rubashkin; he is guilty. Rubashkin was found guilty in a federal court of law by a jury of his peers in America, a country that is a malkhut of chesed as there ever was. He was found guilty, according to the jury, because he had done something wrong. He is not innocent.

According to the court, Rubashkin exaggerated the value of his property to gain a line of credit from a bank. Whether he paid interest on that loan is irrelevant. He refused several plea deals and took on the justice system and they made an example out of him. The prosecutors are not anti-Semites, calling them that or attributing his conviction to some grand conspiracy of unions, the For-

ward newspaper or the odious PETA, smacks of not only intellectual dishonesty but outright falsehoods. We say this and add that this does not mean that we should hesitate in our efforts for a fairer sentence for Rubashkin.

Rubashkin is not a modern-day Alfred Dreyfus, the French officer who was falsely accused of treason. Rubashkin's case is similar to Jonathan Pollard, a man who committed a crime but who is serving a far too severe sentence.

We also feel the need to criticize what we perceive as the deification of Rubashkin. While there are countless good deeds that he and his family have done, he is not perfect. This is not meant to cast allegations against his character, but to state there is no such thing as saints outside of children's story books and ArtScroll biographies.

Furthermore, Rubashkin doesn't need to be one for us to feel for him and work on his behalf. To feel compassion for a fellow human being not because they have no faults, but because they do is an essential element of being a human. We call this empathy. Grace and forgiveness are not only the province of the blameless.

The most harrowing part of the entire Rubashkin trial didn't come in the false allegations of anti-Semitism by the charedi press, but in the last days of the sentencing, when Rubashkin admitted to doing wrong. When he sat on the stand and asked for clemency, regretting that he had ever gone into the meat processing industry; when he said that he would have rather have been a shliach.

It's easy to love someone who's never made a mistake, it's far harder to love someone who has.

A number of letters also mentioned the unfairness of the justice system. This seemed a little bit obvious to us. Of course, the justice system is unfair. That's a given. Look no further than the higher rate of African-Americans serving in prison. Look no further than the work of The Innocence Project, which was founded by members of Yeshiva University's Cardozo School of Law. Through the years they've freed hundreds of men and women who have been serving life sentences for crimes they have been completely innocent of. On a local level, look at Martin Tankleff, a Jewish resident of Suffolk County, who was falsely accused of the murder of his parents. He served 17 years before he was exonerated. In this case, the Orthodox community was not simply silent, but deathly still. The disparity between the sentences of Rubashkin and his son-in-law is another example of this. Rubashkin can pay back the money he stole, Weiss can never repair the life of the child he destroyed. But the real question is one of degrees. Had Rubashkin been given 10 years would we have complained? That the justice system is unfair is nothing new, however this unfairness is by degrees.

We wholeheartedly endorse the appeal for Sholom Rubashkin, but we do so with caveats. We do not want to see him behind bars for 27 years. The sentence is ridiculous. But we make no attempt to claim anti-Semitism, nor do we believe that the trial was a particularly unfair one.

Give to the cause, knowing you're helping a human being who made a mistake. Giving under any other pretense is both a disservice to yourself and to Sholom Rubashkin.

Correction:

In "Shining a light on Iowa" (December 31, 2010) The Jewish Star incorrectly listed Benjamin Brafman as a lawyer for both Milton Balkany and Yaakov Weiss. Brafman defended Balkany but was not involved at all in the Weiss case. The Jewish Star sincerely apologizes for the error.

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Sometimes justice really is blind

The phrase justice is blind has been interpreted throughout the ages in a variety of ways. None so literal for me as the story I'm about to tell. I had been practicing for only a few months some 20 years ago at a law firm that specialized in personal injury cases. In one case I was working on, the defendant filed a motion with the court to dismiss our client's case on certain legal grounds. The motion was received by the law firm's file clerk and erroneously placed in a law firm's diary. We failed to appear on the return date of the motion and thus the comedy of errors began.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BENCH



David Seidemann

The defendant's motion was granted on default due to our failure to appear. The defendant, however, followed up on our error by failing to mail a copy of the judge's order to us. In the interim, we discovered our office diary error and filed a motion to vacate the order of dismissal, citing inadvertent law office failure. The courts have long

recognized such an explanation as one that is valid enough to vacate a default.

The court granted our motion, recognizing and accepting the law office failure excuse, but instructed us to re-file the motion for some other technical reasons with the appearance of our papers. As required when filing a motion of that sort, the movement must include all prior pleadings which now included the defendant's original motion papers and all of their voluminous exhibits; our original motion to vacate the default and all of the accompanying exhibits; and now this third motion with all of its exhibits.

We mailed a copy of this third motion to the defendant as required but, unbeknownst to us, their offices had moved and they hadn't notified us of their new address. Our motion to vacate the default was, you guessed it, granted on default for the defendant's non-appearance. Now it was the defendant's turn to file a motion to vacate on order granted on default against them. This motion by the defendant had all the prior motions and all of the prior exhibits attached to it.

But there was more. Their motion to vacate was missing an exhibit, a measly three-page document in a sea of hundreds of pages, and the court called all parties in for a conference. Justice was indeed blind, or at least nearsighted, as the court clerk was buried behind these mounds of papers on her desk.

While wading through the papers the judge's clerk noticed a missing exhibit from our papers. In an effort of fairness and so the record could be complete, both sides were instructed to re-file their entire motions — our motion to vacate the original order, the defense's motion to vacate the default we obtained and the original underlying motion together with all of the exhibits.

By now the law clerk was invisible. Sequestered behind a forest full of papers each file aimed at undoing a series of mistakes so that the matter could finally be heard on its merits.

But that wasn't the end. The law clerk said it would be easier for the judge if we would both waive all of the mistakes we each claimed the other side made from a technical standpoint and allow the court to simply address the underlying original motion. Both my adversary and I agreed and we left the court that day, confident that all technical impediments and irregularities had been waived. Finally, we thought, the judge could crawl out from behind the reams of paper and issue a decision on the merits.

Oh, how wrong we were.

Three weeks later we received a letter from the court stating that the law clerk needed to see us again. Justice was not only blind, but it was getting annoying. We appeared and met with the law clerk who while taking his job very seriously, always had time

to laugh. "You're going to shoot us," he said. "The judge is so confused by the competing motions to vacate that she can't even find the original motion to dismiss and the original opposition within the mounds of papers that have been filed. There were just too many exhibits and references to the motion. It's impossible to find."

Let's make it simple, said the law clerk. The judge would like the defendant to withdraw his original original motion to dismiss. That way the plaintiff would retroactively never have been in default for failing to appear and all of the ensuing motion practice which now spanned close to two years would be rendered null and void. In other words, start all over as if nothing happened. Get rid of all the prior paperwork, all of the motions.

We went back to our offices and rewrote history.

Wanting to not be the only party in this saga free of error, the court mailed its decision to the defendant's incorrect office address.

A new class of Congressional leaders have taken their seats in Washington. Sometimes it's a good idea to discard the mounds of clutter and start from the beginning.

David Seidemann is a partner with the law firm of Seidemann & Mermelstein. He can be reached at (718) 692-1013 and at ds@lawofficesm.com

Letters to the editor

Snow problem, no problem

To the Editor:

I was on the flight ("Community rescues stranded passengers"; December 31, 2010). I was rationing my two bagels to last the whole day until our flight later that night. Then I heard Rabbi Benzion Klasko and Rabbi Yehoshua Lewis of Rutgers' Meor program saying food was being sent in. I thought we would have some tuna or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. But when I saw the amount of food and the love of those delivering it, it became one of the most inspirational days of my life!

I write this from Jerusalem where I have told everyone about the incredible chesed of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway. Rarely are we privileged to witness Hashem's direct hand and fellow people's chesed and love for each other during such trying times.

Michael Gordon
Highland Park, NJ

At what cost?

To the Editor:

The Rubashkin fund-raising event at the White Shul raises a number of important questions for our community: Is shortening the unquestionably harsh sentence of a convicted Jewish felon truly a "community" issue, and if so, to what extent does it take precedence over other communal issues? Is there a risk that public efforts on behalf of a convicted felon might jeopardize our community's efforts to influence others (Jews and non-Jews) on important political, religious and value-oriented issues — issues that are fundamental to our mission as To-

rah Jews? Is there a risk they might give rise to chilul Hashem? Are these risks proper to be assumed in this case? Do we believe (as suggested in the brochure circulated in connection with the White Shul event) that prosecution of Rubashkin should be equated with persecution — or is that mere tribalism, an attempt to portray the villain as victim

— lifted straight from Al Sharpton's political playbook? Would the \$160,000 raised for Rubashkin's appeal not better be used to provide food or clothes for the needy, the old, the infirm or to help pay for a child's yeshiva tuition? One cannot help but feel for the plight of Rubashkin's family, but the question must be asked: Why does a problem that he

knowingly created in pursuit of his own business interests now somehow belong to all of us?

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Parshat BO

Home, family and a rulebook

In the midst of the tumult surrounding the last of the plagues we are given our first dose of the mitzvot. The Israelites in Egypt were instructed to take what is commonly translated as a "hyssop" branch, dip it into the pre-gathered blood of the lamb, and paint the door posts and mantle before staying indoors for the rest of the night. (12:22)

In 12:24 we are told to "guard this thing as a statute for you and your children forever," but the Talmud (Pesachim 96) clarifies that this statement refers to the commandment of the Paschal lamb, which rounds out the end of 12:21.

The rest of the fifth aliyah, which concludes with 12:28, speaks of the conversation that will ensue with your children one day when you continue to practice these everlasting laws when you'll be living in the

land. Perhaps these verses are a hint to the practice that is arguably most widespread in Jewish life: having a seder on Passover.

The Torah's narrative returns to the tale of the final plague before concluding the chapter with more instruction surrounding how the holiday is to be observed. "It must be eaten in one home. Do not bring any of its meat outside of the

The Jewish family is meant to be a unit which certainly "eats" together, but which also learns and grows together.

not survive outside of the home. Rabbi Menachem Recanati, the author of a Kabbalistic commentary on the Torah, writes that the meat remains in the home so that "the blessing will remain there," since "blessings only remain on modest things."

The essence of the Jewish home is governed by modesty. Modesty in how we behave, how we think, how we talk, how we relate to others, how we view ourselves in relation to G-d, and how much we allow outside influences (non-Torah oriented or Torah-originated) to dictate who we are and how we live our lives.

The second lesson to be derived from the first seder is that there is one rulebook, and that all are equal in the eyes of the law. This is not to suggest that there is no room for accommodation and for doing what we can to make others comfortable. However, in a sense, the Torah is suggesting that once we give everyone the same rulebook, and once everyone is on a level playing field, there is no room for affirmative action. No one gets a free pass on account of ignorance, and no one gets privileges on account of being members of a particular group, unless it is expressed otherwise in the rulebook.

"One law for the native and the proselyte" means all are treated equally, and everyone must play by the same rules. Education is available to all. What do we do with the education opportunities? Participation is available to all — governed by a set of rules. In what way do we choose to capitalize on our participatory opportunities? Weddings, bar/bat mitzvahs, brisses ought to have a shared significance across the spectrum of Judaism. When the perspective is lost as to how these events are to effect our lives, impact our Jewish experience, and further commit ourselves to Godliness, we begin to wonder when, where and how we lost our way. Bar and Bat Mitzvah, for example, have become an industry, where the significance of responsibility and accountability to God, Torah and the Jewish people is largely misplaced.

May we merit to see a time when all the Jewish people follow the same rulebook, when the choices that are made are understood for what they were meant to be.

The seder is one ritual that still has it right, because the focus is on the family unit. It brings everyone together, under one roof, to share a tradition that goes back thousands of years, that remains a link to our heritage that crosses all boundaries.



Rabbi Avi Billet

home..." (12:46)

The set of rules essentially concludes with the most important of all. "There shall be one law for the native and the proselyte who lives among you." (12:49)

There are two points in this depiction of the first seder that are extraordinarily compelling.

The first is the focus on the family, and on what goes on indoors, inside the protection of the home. While it is understood that in Egypt, on that evening, it was dangerous to go outside, sometimes we are confronted with the reality that every venture outside of the home is dangerous. I speak not of physical danger from a "supernatural destroyer" or even from law-breaking citizens. Frankly, we are all at risk every day of being involved in an automobile accident, G-d forbid, yet we know this will not prevent us from going outside.

When we leave our homes, and when we bring outside influences into our homes, such as certain magazines, advertisements, and different kinds of media, we lose the protective strength of the walls of our home.

The Jewish family is meant to be a unit which certainly "eats" together, but which also learns and grows together. Everything that is brought into the home that does not strengthen the walls has the potential to weaken the family bond and the Torah foundation that is meant to tie it all together.

The meat of the Paschal lamb is not to be taken outdoors because some things can-

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That's life

Edited by Miriam L. Wallach

Dear That's Life,

As a self-proclaimed gym rat, it is very rare that a day goes by without me exercising for at least an hour. Some people prefer to workout at home — and some people prefer not to work out at all. I bought my husband a hammock for Father's Day a number of years ago and it was the perfect gift. At least if he's going to lay down, he can do it outside.

People go to the gym for different reasons. For me, it clears my head. I am able to start my day with the planets all in alignment if I have spent some time on the elliptical. It is not only for my physical health but for my mental wellbeing as well — although, some would argue that getting up at 5:00 a.m. to be at the gym when it opens a half an hour later is not a sign of mental health but mental illness. I do not enjoy going in the afternoon and rarely in the evening — it is part of my morning routine. Regardless of when I go, it is my "alone time" and I am pretty oblivious to things going on around me while I am there.

I have tried a couple of gym classes, but they are really not for me. I like to be in my own space and in my own head. While I have friends who love their spin classes and enjoy working out with other people, I am busy enough competing against myself. With that, about a year ago, I took up boxing and no — that was not a typo. If ever there was a way to get rid of pent up frustrations in a healthy manner, it is punching a hanging bag. One of my best birthday presents was my own set of wraps and gloves. Some people watch and stare as



I workout, as most people who use that part of the gym are men, but I do not really care. I am not there for you — I am there for me.

Last week, after three snow days and a round trip drive from Woodmere to JFK that took almost two hours, there was only one way to release all of my tension. I changed my clothes, grabbed my bag and went back to the gym. I must have been pretty stressed. The bag seemed to dance from the ceiling with each blow I knocked into it. I kicked it, punched it and pounded it. Going to the gym in the morning with the same people over and over, my routine is nothing new and many people have seen me wrap my hands and put on my gloves. One fellow gym-goer at that hour refers to me as "Miriam Ali." When someone else heard I had six children, he responded, "No wonder you punch that bag the way you do!" I reassured him I am very fond of my kids and my love of boxing has only to do with me and not with them. The people in the evening, however, are not part of my crew since I am an early-bird, and I seemed to have piqued one person's curiosity who had never seen me before.

After cutting my elbow at one point, I stepped out of the studio to wash it off. This man whom I had never met came over to me. Pretty out of breath from his own workout and looking at my bleeding elbow, he smiled and said, "Jeez — if you told me to wash the dishes, I'd wash the dishes!"

I blushed and laughed. If only it was that easy.

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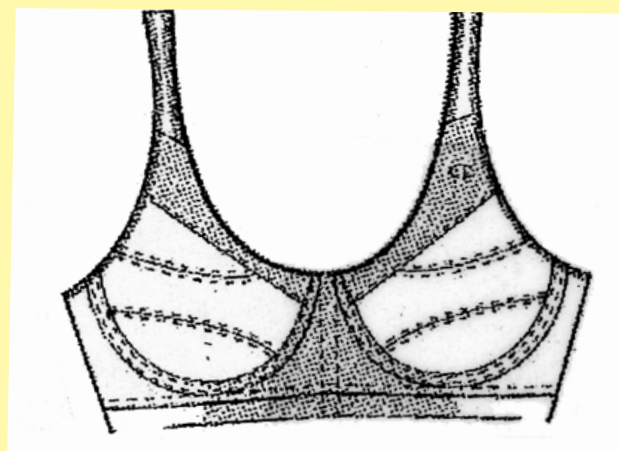
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