

## Rabbi Norman Lamm Addresses Student Body

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frustrating everyday topics concerning religion and science," said Darona Turk ('03). "Rabbi Lamm's speech was a step in the right direction."

After his speech, Rabbi Lamm told the *Struggle* that he believed the Haredi and Ultra-Orthodox communities would eventually practice Modern Orthodoxy out of necessity. Eventually, he thinks, these sects of Judaism will no longer be able to completely separate themselves from western culture and will be compelled to learn how to combine Torah and *Madah*.

In Yeshiva University, said Rabbi Lamm, the presence of such a combination of Torah and *Madah* is very uplifting, especially for him personally at times when his job becomes overwhelming. During the 26 years that he has served as the university's president, Yeshiva University has experienced an increase in intellectual maturity, said Rabbi Lamm. Today, the uni-

versity is ranked the 40<sup>th</sup> best college in the first tier by *The U.S. News's* annual college ranking report, and has been "rising over the years," he said.

But despite the school's academic progress, Rabbi Lamm said his greatest pleasure from working at Yeshiva University still remains the sight of students advancing themselves, studying Torah, and displaying great diversity in the Jewish community.

Interviews conducted with students suggested that freshmen and sophomores were more influenced by Rabbi Lamm's speech than the upperclassmen were. According to some freshmen like Leora Petashnick ('06), Rabbi Lamm's speech made Yeshiva University and its sister college Stern more appealing. For other students, though, such as junior Shuli Shinar, Rabbi Lamm's speech was inspirational but did not convince them to continue to learn the intricacies of Torah and *Madah* at Yeshiva University.

Following the assembly, many classes, including Rabbi Weinberger's Talmud classes and Rabbi Blau's Jewish History classes, dedicated time to discussing the issues raised by Rabbi Lamm. Students in Rabbi Fleischman's public speaking class took notes during Rabbi Lamm's speech and wrote an essay assessing Rabbi Lamm's hand gestures, enthusiasm, voice, and choice of words.

"Now that I am taking the public speaking class I know how to distinguish between a good speaker and a bad one," said Melissa Strolevis ('04). "Rabbi Lamm is a really great speaker, and we watched him carefully to learn how to improve our own speech."

Due to his other responsibilities, Rabbi Lamm rarely has time to speak to high school students. However, he agreed to speak to the Frisch community at the school's behest and the urging of his granddaughters, Ariella ('03) and Ahuva Warburg ('05).

## Students Overload on Advanced Placement Courses

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The most recent adjustment to Frisch's AP structure was this year's addition of AP American History. Dr. Stein reported that "the feedback is that kids [juniors] are working hard."

Davies, who is enlisted in AP American History, feels that she's "learning a lot but working really, really hard for just one history class." She added, "I guess that's because it's an AP."

But Dr. Stein feels that the 11th graders' workload and feedback "probably wouldn't be different" if the class were labeled "high honors" instead of "AP."

Many seniors applaud the altered 11th grade curriculum. Danielle Roth ('03) said, "I wish I could have taken AP [American] History last year because so many of us seniors now have schedules jam-packed with APs. Had I been given the option to take the AP in 11th grade, I would have definitely done so [to allow for] an evenly distributed AP schedule."

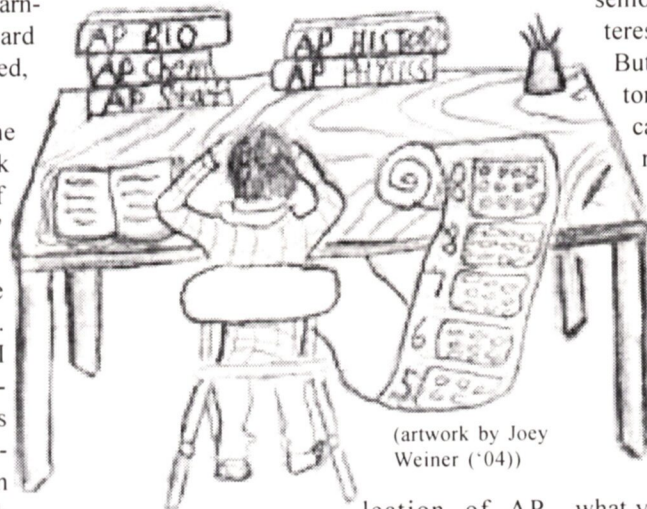
Roth added, "I wish Frisch would offer more APs in general in 11th grade" to alleviate the pressure in senior year.

Schools like Riverdale Country fulfill Roth's wish. Students there can theoretically take as many AP courses as they want as early as 10th grade, though most students don't receive faculty approval to take such courses until 11th grade. Then, students there may choose from a wide se-

lection of AP courses offered in senior year. "It's as simple as that," he said.

Frisch graduate Judah Rauch ('02) feels one of the biggest benefits of AP courses is their way of "letting you get a feel for what you're interested in. He personally benefited from this perk; before his senior year, he was "only somewhat interested" in American History, he said. But when he took AP American History he fell in love with the class because of the great depth of the material and his exposure "to many of the details behind the scenes," specifically politics, he explained. His acquired interest in studying politics prompted him to choose political science as his college major.

Rauch advises students hooked on APs that the courses "don't determine your life. If anything, they tell you what you *don't* want to do." He said by discovering one's interests through APs, a student can simply jump into college with better knowledge of his interests. "It all works out in the end," he said.



(artwork by Joey Weiner ('04))

lection of AP courses, manipulating their schedules to fit their academic interests.

But Dr. Stein maintains that the current number and types of APs offered in 11th grade are appropriate. He feels that 11th graders "aren't ready" to take the AP

## New Club Allows Students to Dance the Night Away

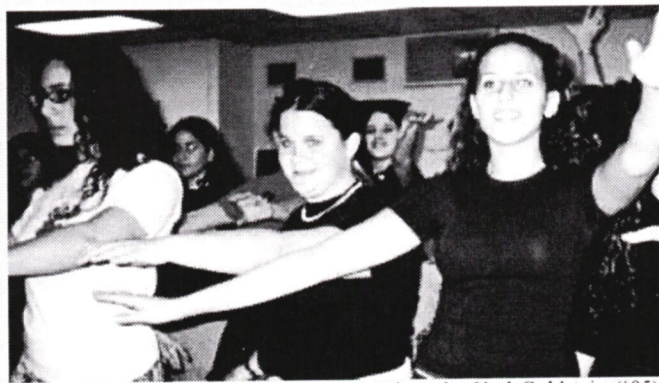
by Susie Wahrman

When people think of an Orthodox yeshiva high school, they usually don't imagine a classroom full of girls doing modern dances, but the Dance Club, started by Amy Oppenheimer ('03), defies this stereotype. Every Wednesday about 35 girls gather in room 16 to dance for an hour after school with the club.

"Dancing was a big part of my high school experience," said Ms. Shira Resnick, a Judaic studies teacher and the Dance Club's advisor. "It was a wonderful way to relieve tension after a long day of school. Therefore, when I happened to overhear Amy Oppenheimer say that she wanted to start a dance club, I volunteered to run and advise it."

During each lesson, Resnick and Oppenheimer teach the students a few basic dance positions and a personally choreographed dance. To personalize the dance, the girls assemble into groups and add their own original finishing touches

to the choreography. The girls chat and laugh as they learn the steps, which usually combine hip-hop and jazz, but occasionally include more exotic forms like belly



(photo by Yael Goldstein ('05))

Dance club members practice new routine.

dancing. With such a great atmosphere and variety of dances, said Oppenheimer, the Dance Club "is just plain old fun for anyone."

The club is especially popular among freshmen, many of whom are eager to join extracurricular activities. "I really wanted

to get involved in school activities," Michelle Grundman ('06) said, "Dancing is something that is easy to do, and it's a great opportunity to meet new people."

Many of the members feel that the club, which is open only to girls for reasons of *tzniut* (modesty), relaxes them a great deal. "Dancing is the way to free the soul and let go the way you never can during everyday life," Adi Elbaz ('05) said. During the first class over thirty girls in sweats swayed their arms and moved their feet to an Indian beat from the movie *Monsoon Wedding*. "I really enjoy dancing in a room with so much enthusiasm," Lyndsay Gang ('05) commented.

The Dance Club hopes to hold a performance in the spring and donate the proceeds to *tzedakah* (charity). A dance team may also be organized to compete against teams at other schools, such as Ramaz.

## Mechina

## Program: Strong but Small

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program as an eleventh grader, said, "Yeshiva life is too sheltered. The students here are all very homogeneous, although they are all very nice. I think that public school kids do not want to come to a school that is so sheltered and strict." In addition, not many public school students are looking to take on the workload of a dual curriculum and attend a school with such long hours.

Alexander Borghard ('06) disagreed. "I came to Frisch from Dwight Englewood, and I'm having a great time. I don't think that people here are all the same; I've found plenty of different, interesting people to be friends with. Although there are many new rules here that I have to learn to get used to, I think I'm better off for it in the long run," he said.

Frisch also lost a popular attraction for public school students with the recent passing of Rabbi Shlomo Kahn. "People had such a respect for Gemara after his class," Rapp said.

Tzili Ben-Shaon ('05) added, "Now that Rabbi [Nisanel] Yudin has taken over the program, it's better than ever. He's awesome; he's so patient and willing to work with us. I have really high expectations for the future of the program."

Another reason for the program's drop in population is that NCSY (The National Conference of Synagogue Youth) does not attract as many non-yeshiva students as it did in the past, said Dr. Stein. Previously, students would be introduced to Judaism through NCSY and then further pursue what they had learned by attending the Mechina program. Today, though, most public school students avoid Jewish youth groups altogether or participate in non-Orthodox groups like Young Judea or United Synagogue Youth.

The school has been looking for innovative ways to attract participants to the Mechina program. In addition to advertising through the JCC (Jewish Community Center), the school held an open house last year for students in the Bergen County Hebrew High School for Jewish Studies.

Despite the difficulty of attracting students, the school has no interest in shutting down the Mechina Program, Dr. Stein said. Even though it is very costly and occupies crucial classroom space, the school is determined to continue the program because its members are vibrant parts of the student body. These students form a key part of the Frisch community, while offering a unique perspective not usually provided by students from Orthodox yeshivot.

Rabbi Yudin has high expectations for the program. "A parlor meeting in Tenaflly for five prospective students from the Tenaflly Chabad House will be taking place very soon. It's incredible that there's interest in the program as early as November. Hopefully, this is a sign that many more interested people will be seeking us out throughout the rest of the year," he said.

Moreover, the Mechina program graduates have been some of Frisch's finest alumni. Last year, the valedictorian from the graduating class at Yeshiva University was a Frisch alumnus who had been in the Mechina program during ninth grade.



# The Struggle

"Without struggle there is no progress."

- Frederick Douglass

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## Leader of Modern Orthodoxy Speaks to Students

by Gil Schwartz and Danielle Slutzky

An unusual silence pervaded the Isaac Levinstein Synagogue as formally dressed students and faculty stood anticipating the arrival of Rabbi Norman Lamm, the leader of Modern Orthodoxy and president of Yeshiva University. A sign posted on the stage said, "Your eyes should follow your teachers," and indeed the students' eyes did as the entire Judaic faculty escorted in Rabbi Lamm.

After greeting the Frisch community, Rabbi Lamm proceeded to address a question that the Modern Orthodox community tackles daily: "How do Jews take the best of Western culture and science, *Madah*, and connect it to Torah?" His speech offered new insights and/or confirmed old ones for students, stimulating further discussion throughout the Frisch community.

Rabbi Lamm explained that before one can achieve an integration of Torah, "the center of Jewish life," and Western culture and science, one must first master the basics of each individually. He said that if Frisch students integrate their Judaic and general studies, utilize Torah and *Madah*, respect other denominations in Judaism and behave with dedication and integrity, they will be a source of pride and pleasure to the Jewish nation.

Dr. Kalman Stein was pleased that Rabbi Lamm chose to speak about the importance of a link between secular and Ju-

daic studies because the school must "give students the opportunities to think about Torah and *Madah* in an integrated way," he said. According to Tali Fishel ('04'), Rabbi Lamm's speech "put into perspective the fact that the Torah we learn every

to establish a unit later on in the year that will show how science and Judaism intertwine in everyday life.

For those, such as Rabbi Nisanel Yudin, who had heard Rabbi Lamm speak previously, his presentation at Frisch was a "nice contrast" to his lectures they had heard at Yeshiva University attended by thousands of people.

"Rabbi Lamm was unbelievably polished when he spoke to university students. I was impressed that he was able to speak to high-school students on a level that they could relate to," said Rabbi Yudin.

Rabbi Yudin also said that the presentation was the most informal one he had seen Rabbi Lamm give, partly because he engaged in a question and answer session following the speech. However, some students, such as Ayelet Boussi ('04), found the assembly to be too formal because the way everyone had been instructed to dress. Also,

the requirement to address Rabbi Lamm in the third person "made people hesitant to interact with him as much as they should have," said Boussi.

Nevertheless, many students expressed a hope that the school will continue to have assemblies addressing religious issues and other subjects not usually confronted. "I think it is important for the school to help the students deal with



(Photo by JJ Schmuckler ('03))

Rabbi Lamm addresses the students.

day in school and elsewhere does not contrast to or limit our lives. It simply provides guidelines by which to live them."

Dr. Stein said, "The real challenge is not learning Torah and *Madah* separately but figuring out the way we can be part of an exciting world while deciding which of its attractions can be kept and which need to be filtered out."

To help Frisch students accomplish this integration, Dr. Stein is planning

## Mechina Program Revitalized Despite Small Numbers

by Mindy Feldman

The Mechina program has been a vital and vibrant component of Frisch's educational philosophy since the school's founding. Over the past few years, however, the program has experienced a substantial decline in enrollment. This year, there are only three freshmen in the Mechina class, compared to the past average of ten.

A special class designed for students from public school, the Mechina program helps students who have little or no yeshiva background catch up with yeshiva students who have been taking Judaic classes for their entire educational lives. It also eases their transition into a yeshiva environment through a special Mechina *minyan* (prayer group).

Members of the administration attributed the program's decreased enrollment to a number of reasons. In terms of demographics, a smaller number of Russian students, once the main constituents of the program, have immigrated to America over the past few years. This has forced the school to fill the program with primarily public school students. In addition, Rabbi Shalom Richter attributes the decline to the recent openings of Solomon Schechter high schools in the area. He observed that, "Many years ago, Frisch was the only yeshiva in town. Anyone with any type of Jewish affiliation or Torah education was attracted to come here. Now, Schechter serves all constituencies of the Conservative community."

Agreeing with this, Dr. Kalman Stein added, "Parents who would usually

send their children to public school for elementary school and then to Frisch for high school have been sending their children to Schechter from kindergarten. These students will then either continue at Schechter for high school or come to Frisch. But these students do not need to enter the Mechina program if they attend Frisch."

In contrast, a number of students attributed the Mechina program's diminution to the views and desires of public school students. Justin Rapp ('04), who was in the Mechina program in ninth grade, commented, "Since public school kids are not as religious as the yeshiva kids, they are more inclined to go to Schechter." Beth Zur ('04), who is currently in the Mechina

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## APs: What's the Fuss All About?

by Eitan Stavsky

Justin Weitz ('03) is enrolled in five Advanced Placement (AP) courses. JJ Schmuckler ('03) is taking four APs this year, and Nikki Davies ('04) is taking three. One of her classes, AP Physics, meets eight times a week and requires her to stay in school until 7:00 P.M. for laboratory exercises on a bi-weekly basis. The picture is clear: Frisch juniors' and seniors' schedules are densely packed with AP Courses. And with these courses come piles of homework, tests, assignments and more.

Dr. Kalman Stein acknowledged that the AP course are definitely "very sophisticated courses." According to him, the courses benefit students by helping them "grow academically and intellectually."

But even so, Dr. Stein said, "I wish...we could do away with AP courses...and teach college-level courses without having someone else's idea" of the final exam, that is, the standardized AP test. Dr. Stein's frustrations lie in the fact that teachers of AP classes must conform to a set standard, rather than develop their own.

Dr. Stein doesn't stand alone in his unhappiness. Lauren Wilner, a student at the Riverdale Country Day School, reported that her school's administration is also discontent with the AP system. The administrators feel that AP courses do not allow students "to properly enjoy and absorb the content, for the teachers are forced to rush" through the material and omit the subject's "more interesting topics."

Despite his dislike of the AP structure, Dr. Stein doesn't plan to discontinue the AP curriculum. He said, "Unfortunately, some of the more selective colleges seem to be hung up" on the number and types of APs students take, "so we have to go along."

However, Dr. Stein added, "The school should maybe do a better job of convincing kids not to overextend themselves" by taking an excessive number of APs. "It's insane," he said. He suggested as a partial solution to the problem the possibility of prohibiting students from taking courses that prevent them from having lunch period.

Dana Erdfarb ('04) understands Dr. Stein's frustrations with "the way Frisch students overwork themselves with APs. Honestly, I dropped one of my APs because it just wasn't worth the work and missing lunch for it." But she "still think[s] it should be up to the kids to decide whether or not they're willing to sacrifice their lunch period for academics."

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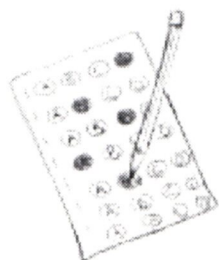
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