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The Sinai Spark

"The Spark Will Carry the Flame."

Volume 2, Issue 1

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Our Team

Editors-in-Chief
Isaac Braverman
Daniel Gruszow

Photographer
Avrumie Sternfeld

High School Correspondent
David Glass

Middle School Correspondent
Noah Zicherman

SINAI

SPARK

Contact:
thesinaispark@gmail.com

Editor's Note

"The Spark Will Ignite the Fire."

These words comprised the slogan of the Sinai Spark–the first known newsletter of Sinai Academy. Now, over three decades later, it is back.

In commemoration of Sinai's upcoming fortieth anniversary next year, and in honor of our school's past, the Sinai Reporter is rebranding to the Sinai Spark. This isn't the only change, however. Students and teachers from last year might notice that the newsletter looks a little different than when you last saw it. Not only do we have a completely new format, in both material and in design, the Sinai Spark has now entered volume two. The three issues under "the Sinai Reporter" label constitute volume one.

Speaking of volume one, let's take a second to introduce (or reintroduce) you to our staff team from last year:

- ***Isaac Braverman*** *and* ***Daniel Gruszow*** *(both tenth grade) serve as the editors-in-chief. Their job is to oversee production.of the paper.*
- ***Avrumie Sternfeld*** *(eleventh grade) is our photographer.*
- ***David Glass*** *(tenth grade) and* ***Noah Zicherman*** *(eighth grade) are your high school and middle school correspondent, respectively. Their roles are to cover anything engaging related to either the middle (sixth to eight) or high school (ninth through twelfth) devisions of Sinai, though they might cover other topics from time to time.*

We would also like to thank Rabbi Berlin for his input on this issue.

Lastly, if you would in any way be interested in joining the staff team for the Sinai Spark, submissions are open year-round. It'd be best to contact us at thesinaispark@gmail.com If not, you can always try to mention the topic to us in person.

Chag Shameach, and enjoy!

The Editors

Words from our Principals

"I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our students, both the former students from last year and the new students, that this year should be a successful one. You should all reach all your potential, spiritually and scholastically, and welcome you all again as part of the Sinai family."

– Rabbi Silber
Rosh Yeshiva/Dean



"It is my greatest honor to welcome you to the newest edition of the Sinai Spark. Publishing a newspaper in Sinai has a very special place in my heart. As some of you may know, when I was a student, I published ten issues of the Sinai Press [Sinai's previous newsletter, headed by Rabbi Berlin] from the years 1999 to 2000, and I believe that they were additions that helped unite the school, helped create a sense of community, helped students discover more about their *rebbeim* and teachers, and helped shape some of the views that we had, with all my classmates and all their opinion pieces and politics, Judaism and sports. It basically gave me the confidence I needed to start a newspaper in college, and then start a *Torah* newsletter [Torah Sweets] for the entire world that I still publish today.

So, it's a great opportunity for anybody who joins the Sinai Spark to develop their skills and commutation, teamwork and collaboration, creativity and organization, as well as graphic design and expressing their views in a great setting. It's my blessing to anybody who gets involved in the Sinai Spark to have a lot of success in all these endeavors and skills, and Hashem should bless you to use these talents that you develop for a positive purpose."

– Rabbi Berlin
English Principal



NEWS-FLASH

Farewells

The Sinai Spark begrudgingly wishes farewell to the following teachers:

- ***Mr. Feldstein**, English Principal*
- ***Rabbi Yakubov**, Hebrew Teacher*
- ***Coach K.**, Gym Teacher*
- ***Mrs. Diana**, P3*

Anyone from last year can agree that with these losses, Sinai feels different. Specifically speaking, the loss of Mr. Feldstein as English principal is a hard one. It's safe to say that everyone can agree that his absence especially cannot be ignored.

We'd like to thank all the aforementioned teachers for their years of dedication to the school. Additionally, we'd also like to wish any students who graduated or went on to pursue other endeavors separate from Sinai as well.

Condolences

We regret to inform you of the passing of Rabbi Weinberg Z"L around a month ago. Though not a name most in Sinai recognize nowadays, just a couple years ago, Rabbi Weinberg was a high school Rebbi here at Sinai.
We wish his family the best during this time.

Congraulations!

In happier news, the Sinai Spark would like to wish mazal tov to Noah Steinberg-Perez (eighth grade) upon his bar mitzvah last week. We'd also like to wish a happy birthday to the following students: Benjamin Aviad and Yonatan Gilliov (both in tenth grade).



Rabbi Weinberg is seated far right. Photo is courtesy of Shlomo Aminov (twelfth grade).

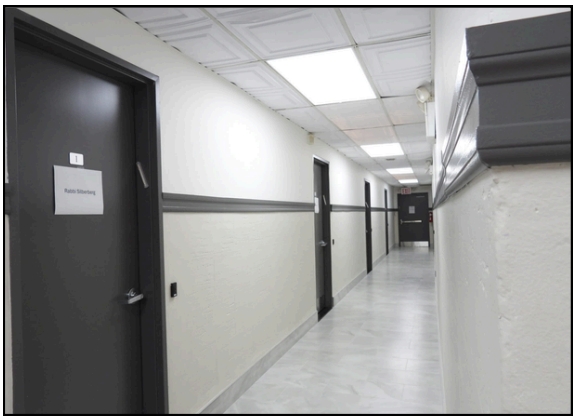
Events

Earlier this month, namely on the sixth, the September 11 Family Group hosted its yearly 9/11 ceremony in Asser Levy Park in Coney Island. The event is dedicated to Russian-Jewish families who lost their children/relatives during the September 11th attacks. Thank you to all of the students who volunteered on their very own free time to help out.

On a lighter note, on Chol Hamoed Succos, the school is planning to host a trip to Hershey Park in Pennsylvania. The trip is scheduled imy"H to be on September 29th (on a Tuesday.) If anyone is interested in attending, please inquire to Rabbi Silber ASAP. We look forward!

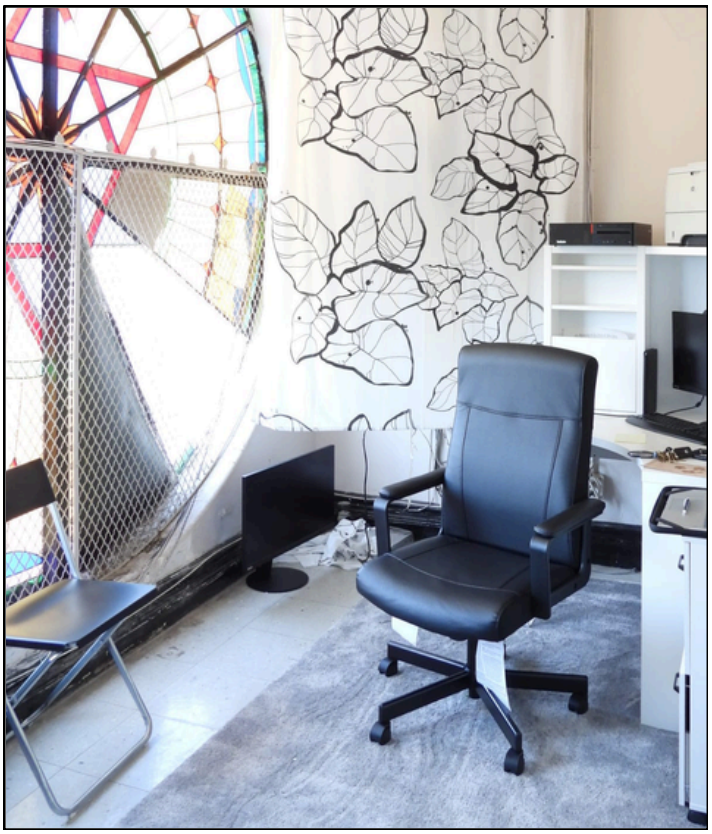
Renovations

In other exciting news, the third floor has finally received some much needed renovations. The remodeling includes new painted doors (put in from last year, though finally painted black), new lockers, new painted walls-replacing the old blue with white; new flooring, and more. As of recently, the steps outside the entrance to the building have also been replaced, now sporting a sleek gray design, retiring the former gray that once resided there. The school's new appearance has been aptly described by some students as "emulating a Syrian Shul in Deal."





New lockers!



Mr. Berlin's—formerly Mr. Feldstein's—new office.

A Thought on Succos

Daniel Gruszow

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe (ZT"L). If you ask anybody about Sukkos, the first thing that will come to their mind are the mitzvos of the Four Species and sitting in a sukkah. However, there is a deeper connection between the two than one might think.

In the Gemara (Sukkah 27b), we learn that "All Israel is worthy to sit in one sukkah." In short, this means that one should make his sukkah worthy for the whole Jewish nation to dwell in together as one unified people–from halachac authenticity of the sukkah, to creating a heimish atmosphere inside.

Regarding the Four Species, the Midrash explains that the Four Species are supposed to represent the unity of the Jewish people.
While the lulav only has a good taste, representing one who learns Torah diligently but doesn't do mitzvos–the hadassim have only a good smell, representing somebody who does mitzvos but doesn't learn. The esrog, on the other hand, has a smell and taste, representing the ideal Jewish personality, while the aravos don't have either, representing a Jewish soul waiting to reconnect to its Creator.

The fact that the mitzvah can only be done with all four species symbolizes the incredible achdus–unity of the Yidden.–unlike any other nation in the world.

This serves in conjunction with the teachings of the Gemara from earlier. That we should love and care for every Jew no matter their backround and level of observance in yiddeshkiet. It should be one this merit that all of Clal Yisroel should reach lofty spiritual heights this Chag!



The Rebbe on Chol Hamoed Sukkos (1988/5749).

Whatchu Talkin' About, (Mr.) Berlin?

Isaac Braverman

One of, if not the most major, differences between this school year and the last one is the addition of a new English principal: Rabbi Mendel Berlin. Rabbi Berlin has overseen a number of changes to Sinai so far–but what exactly are these changes?

Well, lucky for you, we're going to be discussing that today. But before we begin, let's get a better picture at who exactly Rabbi Berlin is.

Origins

We won't dwell on this section for too long, considering we already had two interviews with the rabbi last year, but long story short: around nine years after Sinai Academy's establishment, a kid by the name of Max Berlin would first step foot into its building. Max was introduced to the school through Rabbi Aryeh Katzin, a founder and former dean of Sinai.

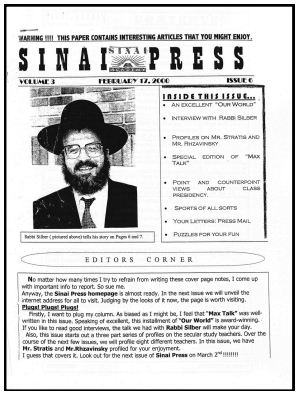
Compared to now, Sinai was a completely different school back then, and Max was typical of what you would find there at the time: an irreligious kid, either an immigrant from the former Soviet Union or a child of one, longing to expand his knowledge about religion.

Going off our interview, in 1999, during his senior year, Max, alongside the help of several others, started the Sinai Press. The newspaper would last until the following year, when Max and his contemporaries graduated from Sinai.

Fast-forward to 2025, Max, now Rabbi Mendel Berlin, via the request of Mr. Feldstein, our then-English principal, would return to Sinai, this time as an English teacher. He taught the sixth, seventh and ninth grades.

Closer to the end of the school year, Mr. Feldstein moved to New Jersey. Because of the long-distance drive he had to undertake every day, Mr. Feldstein gave up the position to Rabbi Berlin. The decision was finalized in May, with Feldstein guiding Berlin through every step of the way, leading us to today. *(cont. on next page)*





WARNING !!!! THIS PAPER CONTAINS INTERESTING ARTICLES THAT YOU MIGHT ENJOY.

SINAI PRESS

VOLUME 3 FEBRUARY 17, 2000 ISSUE 6

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

- AN EXCELLENT "OUR WORLD"
- INTERVIEW WITH RABBI SILBER
- PROFILES ON MR. SIYATIS AND MR. RHZAVINSKY
- SPECIAL EDITION OF "MAX TALK"
- POINT AND COUNTERPOINT VIEWS ABOUT CLASS PRESIDENCY
- SPORTS OF ALL SORTS
- YOUR LETTERS: PRESS MAIL
- PUZZLES FOR YOUR FUN

Rabbi Silber (pictured above) tells his story on Pages 4 and 5

EDITORS CORNER

No matter how many times I try to refrain from writing these cover page notes, I come up with important info to report. So sue me.
Anyway, the **Sinai Press homepage** is almost ready. In the next issue we will unveil the internet address for all to visit. Judging by the looks of it now, the page is worth visiting.
Flugel Flugel Flugel
Finally, I want to plug my column. As biased as I might be, I feel that **"Max Talk"** was well-written in this issue. Speaking of excellent, this installment of **"Our World"** is award-winning. If you like to read good interviews, the talk we had with **Rabbi Silber** will make your day.
Also, this issue starts out a three part series of profiles on the secular study teachers. Over the course of the next few issues, we will profile eight different teachers. In this issue, we have **Mr. Siyatis** and **Mr.Rhzavinsky** profiled for your enjoyment.
I guess that covers it. Look out for the next issue of **Sinai Press** on March 2nd!!!!!!!!

Left to right: *Rabbi Berlin seated in Mr. Feldstein's former office; the cover of an issue of the Sinai Press (2000), Rabbi Berlin's former newsletter.*

Policies

Starting off with policies, we have a pretty drastic one: dress codes. Compared to last year, the dress code was fairly lax; this school year, however, Rabbi Berlin is doubling down on the policy. Prohibited items include (via the school handbook): "Any top without provocative designs", torn or faded jeans, sweatpants (with the exception of cold weather) and shorts. The school handbook warns that "a student who comes to school with a shirt that does not fit the above policy [aforementioned clothing] may be sent home or given in-school detention."

Another policy, which can be remembered by students who took Mr. Berlin's classes from last year, is that every time a teacher or rabbi walks into a room, all students must stand up and wish the teacher either a good morning or good afternoon. This was a practice Mr. Berlin previously used in his classes last year.

Education

School policies aren't the only thing undertaking transformations—education is also receiving an overhaul, arguably more so than any school policy.

For example, there's now plenty of new teachers in Sinai. Obviously, there's Rabbi Berlin, the new English principal who replaced Mr. Feldstein, but there's also Rabbi Berelowitz, replacing Rabbi Yakubov's class; Mr. Rio, an English teacher and P3; Mrs. Benlulu, the new guidance counselor; several new P3s, replacing Coach K. and Mrs. Diana, and a new speech therapist; and lastly, Oshri Giliov, the newest gym teacher and a Sinai alumni, replacing Coach K.

Going into schedule changes, grades six to ten now have a fitness class in the middle of the school day (10:45-11:30), headed by Coach Hershkowitz. This contrasts to just gym class at the end of the day during previous school years, which was universal for all grades. Speaking of such, gym class is no longer the last period for all grades anymore. Though some grades (ninth and tenth) still have gym at the end of the day, other students take different classes. Additionally, ninth and twelfth grade students now take Public Speaking, both taught by Rabbi Berlin and Mr. Chhe, respectively.

And of course, we can't forget about the elephant in the room: vocationals. Currently, vocationals are for the high school grades and include Coding, Shark Tank and Real Estate.

Our Newsletter

Last but not least, let's go over what Rabbi Berlin thinks about this very newsletter. Surprise, surprise, he is a major proponent of it.

As said by Mr. Berlin himself earlier in this issue, he was the head of a school newsletter himself, and believes that having a school newsletter is an important factor in building communities.

Uniting School:

The Sinai School Senate

Noah Zicherman

Imagine if your ideas could be heard! They can be made possible by the help of the Sinai Student Senate! But what even is the Sinai Student Senate?

What is the Senate?

The Sinai Student Senate would be a council made up of seven individuals (one from each class) and 7 alternates (Vice representatives if initial representative is not present).
The representatives would all be volunteers. The class will decide which of the volunteers is best suited to represent their class.

How Can You Make an Impact

You can make an impact by writing anonymous and reasonable suggestions. We could have a suggestion box, or you could pass your suggestion digitally via texting a number who will put your suggestion in the hands of the Senate.
Once a month, the Senate comes together, and all seven council members vote "I" (Yes) or "Nay" (No). The suggestion reader is rotated every meeting. They can still vote.
After the meeting, the Senate passes the votes onto someone like Mr. Berlin, who looks it over and decides if any of these ideas should be part of Sinai Academy.

Why Have a Senate?

I personally think this is a good idea because it allows everyone's ideas to be heard, and it also teaches people about the US Senate and its power, and how to be a leader.

Interview with Mr. Rio

Conducted by Isaac Braverman/Daniel Gruszow

Around a week ago, the two editors-in-chief, Daniel and Isaac, were able to snatch a quick interview with Mr. Rio, the newest English teacher, during lunch. Here's what we got:

Q: How Did you First Hear About Sinai? (Daniel)

A: *So I was actually here a long time ago, just for P3. And then, it's kind of a little complicated how I got here this year, but, I received an email from an old co-worker, and the old co-worker said that they wanted us all back at the old school that we were at together. That email, I responded to, and it turns out it was a company or an agency that was working with Sinai. They said, "Well, I think we might prefer if you forgot about your old school, and come with us and work at Sinai." And that's kind of how it all manifested itself.*

Q: And give us a bit information about yourself, just some basic background information. (from Daniel)

A: *Information about myself? Well, I've been in education twenty-one years. All different, you know, types of environments: Public school, private school, you know, a lot of yeshivahs. I did test prep classes for SATs, and for specialized high schools.*

I live in Brooklyn and New Jersey. I graduated from Hunter College. I have my Masters Degree in Special Education and General Education, and that's pretty much it.

Q: Okay, I wanted to ask you, if you were in the position of principal, what would you want to do? (from Isaac)

A: *What would I wanna do, you mean what, what would I want to change? [**Isaac:** Yeah, what would you wanna change and what would you not?] Well, I just want to say I think that Principal Berlin is doing an excellent job, and I don't think he needs replacement.*

If I were principal in any school, I would just prioritize respect for all, respect amongst the students, respect to the faculty. As far as what I would want to implement, again, it's, you know, just make sure that students were on time, ready to work, and that they would be rewarded for effort. *(cont. on next page)*

Q: How is your experience at Sinai so far? (from Daniel)

A: *My experience has been, you know, pretty great. It was the first time, uh— [**Student:** Hello, Mr. Rio. How are you?] Just in time to ruin my experience. [Student walks off]*

The first time, like I said, I did P3, and I worked closely with a lot of students, and I think it had some success. And this time, it's been, you know, great doing P3 as well as teaching classes.

Q: Well, one last question, I guess, is what message would you want Sinai students to know that will be in the newsletter? (from Isaac)

A: I just think that it's important to work hard, and if you put your best effort forth, you usually get results back from that, you know. Just keep dedicating and staying on tracked and focused.

Thanks for reading!
See you in the next issue!