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The Simi Valley Shabbaton

By Ben Kiaei

A typical Friday morning would have welcomed the awakening of inexorable and indolent teenagers. On Friday, October 29th though, the day was greeted with the warm smiles of zealous Valley

Shabbatonim with an incredible trip to Brandis Camp in Simi Valley. As more and more students arrived to school, the basketball courts piled up high with luggage. Vans were by the side and

brinks, the vans were off to a comfortable thirty-minute drive to the Brunswick Bowling Alley. Once there, students hoarded out, eager to challenge their rebbeim to a game of bowling. Ball



Torah students waiting to begin their day—and the 2010 Valley Torah Shabbaton. This year, VT kicked off the year's

ready, waiting to be bombarded with students after davening and breakfast. When filled to their

after ball swiped against the oily, wooden floors, beating down innocent bowling pins. Rabbi Samuels's professional...

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Rabbi Biron's Torah Trivia

Why do we halachically have to wear Tzotziot every day, and what is a purpose of doing so?

How long should you wait to visit a non-relative if they are sick? Why?

Why did the Jews stop decorating their shuls with trees on Shavuot?

When does a vessel not have to go a mikveh? List two examples.

You, Your Cell Phone, & Radiation

By Yosef Yasmeh

When one speaks of radiation, the typical words that are brought to mind are atomic bombs, power plants, and uranium. Very few of us will be reminded of our cell phones—and yet, the inherent dangers of cell phone radiation are very real.

To this date, there are approximately 5.5 billion cell phones worldwide. They have become integrated with our daily lives, simplifying essential tasks such as using a calculator, making a phone call, and getting directions using GPS technology—all this, in the palm of ones hands. However, in recent years, scientists have begun to wonder if extended exposure to cell phones can have a detrimental effect on ones health. What is worse, the potential risks in question are not limited to migraines and headaches, but also include cancer and significant damage to brain cells.

Now for some science. Cell phones, radios, microwaves, and satellites all share the same form of radiation: non-ionizing radiation. X-rays and nuclear energy, on the other hand, emit ionizing radiation, which is known for causing tumor formations, cell damage, and other ailments. When making a call, especially, your phone's transmitter is communicating with a phone tower by the means



Phone Manufacture and Model	SAR Level
Motorola V195s	1.60
BlackBerry Curve 8330	1.54
LG Rumor 2	1.51
Motorola Droid	1.49
Samsung Gravity	1.49
iPhone 4	1.17

of electromagnetic non-ionizing radiation, sent by the antenna in the form of radio waves. The specific absorption rate, or SAR, of your phone is a way of measuring the amount of radio waves absorbed by your body. The lower, the better. Just like microwave waves cause food to heat up, so too do radio waves from your phone cause your facial tissue to heat up. *Overheating* these cells will, factually, do some damage, though some scientists say this is of no concern.

Other studies have yielded more serious results. In 1995, for example, scientist Henry Lai performed a study where a single two-hour exposure to radio wave radiation—at levels safe according to US standards—caused genetic mutations in rats' brain cells and eventual cancer. In addition, Dariusz Leszczynski, a research professor at Finland's Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority in Helsinki, has performed a study and concluded that, "Mobile-phone radiation may be able to indirectly hurt cells, perhaps by interfering with their ability to repair normal DNA damage." Nevertheless, there are multiple other studies that prove otherwise, stating that exposure to non-ionizing radiation is safe.

It is important to note, though, that it is difficult

to come up with conclusive evidence for such a matter. Firstly, testing humans to determine which levels of exposure are safe and which are dangerous presents itself as an ethical dilemma. The use of animals, on the other hand, is simply not sufficient. Furthermore, there is a time factor that plays in between the time of exposure and the actual cell mutation. That is, a person can be exposed to low-level radiation, only to develop a cancer twenty years later. In such cases, the results can be disregarded as being a product of genetics, smoking, or so on.

Thus, until scientists are able to come up with solid scientific proof on either side of the argument, it is up to us, as individuals, to limit our exposures to these potentially hazardous rays.

The Guide to Being a Fresh(ie)man!

By Eliyahu Yifrach

1. For your first year in high school, you will be called a freshie, instead of "the new kid."
2. If someone tells you to watch out for Freshie Fridays, they are just joking with you (until the seniors decide to make it a real thing).
3. The sophomores are like your older brothers who know what you are going through. They are the only ones, which you can pick, bug, and bully without receiving damages (at least permanent, casts excluded). Also, the sophomores are known to you as softies.
4. During your first month at school, you will be given an official nickname. Consider yourself lucky if you're called, "Tzadik Freshie" and unlucky if you're called, "Short Freshie." If you have a nickname like "Loud Freshie" consider yourself semi-lucky.
5. THIS IS CRUTIAL TO BEING A FRESHIE: do not mess with the seniors (a.k.a the kings), unless you want to be whipped with whip cream or its equivalence.

If you are worried about the potential hazards of cell-phone radiation, here are few ways to reduce your risk:

- Use a hands-free headset or the speakerphone feature.
- Use a phone that places the antenna as far away from you as possible.
- Limit calls inside buildings, cars, and rural areas, where your cell phone uses more power to communicate with the cell phone tower.
- Limit use by children, who have softer tissues and skulls and are therefore more susceptible to the radiation.
- Do not sleep near an active headset.

Source: <http://www.mb.com.ph/articles/231397/cell-phone-radiation>

THE DEBATE:

Homework: A Student's Friend or Enemy?



The Up Side

By Moshe Shapiro

Homework is beneficial to students in many ways. Firstly, it gives students a review of what they learned in class. In history class, for instance, when the teacher gives you homework in the book, it is mainly to reinforce what you learned in class so that you understand the material better for the test.

Secondly, homework gives teachers a sense of who pays attention and

does their work. This way, they can know whether or not a student is putting in enough effort in his work and can talk to him about it. In addition, without homework, a student's grade would depend *entirely* on tests and quizzes—which can hardly ever be a good thing.

Without homework, furthermore, students have too much time on their hands. To illuminate, among American

teens, there is an average of one suicide every two hours. The rate of drug use is above 40%; crime, 30%. We should be grateful, as a side note, that unlike public schools, Valley Torah has a schedule that keeps us productive and active for a larger block of the day. Moreover, homework, in moderation, continues that chain of productivity while we are outside of the school environment. In summation, homework is a tool, as opposed to an obstacle, that helps us students reinforce our learning, which also includes many other benefits.



grades. Another point is if the homework load was lessened, students would have extra time at home to spend studying, reading, or pursuing their hobbies. (For example, juniors, when's the last time you had to push off studying for the SAT to a weekend because you had too much homework to do?) Lastly, when teachers assign extensive amounts of homework, it is not only difficult on the students' part, but also on the teacher's, since they need to grade every student's homework. In conclusion, homework is a hassle to both teachers and students, using valuable time that could be used doing something else productive. If revision is imperative, then it is possible to go over in class, but a little homework here and there has never hurt anybody.

The Down Side

By Akiva Leyton

Homework is not as useful as some individuals may think. For my first point, because we have such an effective block schedule, teachers might have excess time to go over what practice may have been necessary for homework. This way, instead of moving on to a new

subject, the teacher can see in class whether or not the students fully understood the material. Furthermore, when students spend their whole day learning in classes, they are less compelled to do homework, either out of exhaustion or distraction, resulting in lower

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throw seemed to be knocking down strike after strike, although we weren't privileged to see the renowned VT bowling champ, Rabbi Stulberger, play. Some students then went over to the arcades to see Rabbi Striks heating up at the Dance Dance Revolution machine and Rabbi Samuels dominating at Guitar Hero.

Once the games were over, we hit the road once more—this time all the way to Brandes. After a short drive and five minutes up the mountains, we arrived to a nice-looking campus with many cabins, of which each grade took

one. Once settled, the real fun began: basketball, football, and cards. We played until the middle of the day and then resided to prepare for Shabbat. On Shabbat, every meal was infused with singing and enlightening dvar torahs. Valley Torah's traditional numbers and pyramid games were played as well, yielding its own set of winners and prizes. On Motzei Shabbat, there was a live comedy routine performed Mr. Silverman (who has written for Jay Leno in the past) and afterwards, an intense game of capture the flag was played—and I mean intense. It dragged on for

two hours, with seniors and freshman versus sophomores and juniors.

The trip's competitions didn't end there, though. The next day meant a day of paintballing at Paintball USA. After burning through about 30,000 paintballs in total, the guys emerged from the fields painted, languished, but smiling from their experiences during the games. Once everyone was finished showing off their bruises and welts, we headed to the vans and made our way home.

On behalf of my fellow students at Valley Torah, I would like to thank the rebbeim, the office staff, Jose, and everyone else involved with this Shabbaton, for making it such a memorable one.

