

# national

## New look in Talmudic study

# Computer to get argument



BASED ON  
A TRUE STORY.  
**missing.**

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Midnight, Thurs.-Fri.-Sat.



**"It's A Four-Letter Fantasy"**  
**TALK DIRTY TO ME**  
starring JESIE ST. JAMES JOHN LESLIE

United Press International  
CHICAGO—The ancient art of Talmudic argument is about to undergo a radical change, with the learned rabbi at the head of the table being replaced by a computer.

Anybody who has tried to straighten out a mistake in his credit and wound up arguing with a computer knows how frustrating it can be. But Rabbi Irving Rosenbaum and his Institute for Computers in Jewish Life plan to bring that frustration right into the rabbi's study.

"It's revolutionary, it really is," said Rosenbaum, who used to head the Jewish University of America in suburban Skokie. "The computer becomes the other rabbi arguing with you.

"If you say, 'This is the way I understand this particular passage,' the computer says, 'You may understand it that way but according to so-and-so it is some other way.'

"Take a classic case — If you see a prominent rabbi leaving a house of prostitution, what should you do? Confront him, tell his congregation, or keep silent? No matter which side you

take, the computer suggests another solution.

"The computer is by no means artificial intelligence but

**"Take a classic case — If you see a prominent rabbi leaving a house of prostitution, what should you do? Confront him, tell his congregation, or keep silent? No matter which side you take, the computer suggests another solution" — Rabbi Irving Rosenbaum, head of the Institute for Computers in Jewish Life.**

ram's retrieval method makes it possible to find information on a vast variety of topics — everything from Sabbath to garlic.

ly, you can find material no one ever thought of looking for because it's only mentioned in passing," he said. "The computer doesn't know where it's supposed to look. It looks at every-

"If you wanted to know about agricultural practices in France in the 12th Century, say about wine growing, there is no written material about wine growing in the 12th century in France. It focuses things more quickly than any human brain can do."

Rosenbaum's plans are just barely under way, but already 1,500 years of rabbinic "responsa" — some 600 million bits of information — have been programmed into the computer at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.

Rosenbaum's institute patches into the computer by telephone and is beginning to provide English translations, not only to Jewish scholars but to scholars in general.

"The responsa cover everything — ethics, morals, business, finance," he said. "They are normative judgments of what should happen at that particular time.

synagogue — they're interested in bingo games."

Rosenbaum said the program is "contemporary problems," Rosenbaum said. "Jewish tradition has accumulated a vast body of thinking over 5,000 years. There are no new human problems really — whether marriage, family, sex, labor, the workplace — all these issues have come up over the centuries.

"There are discussions of removal of life support systems. In the Middle Ages there was the

**"The responsa cover everything — ethics, morals, business, finance. They are normative judgments of what should happen at that particular time" — Rosenbaum**

case of a man dying and outside a woodchopper was pounding away rhythmically. His heart beat in rhythm to the chop. It was the only thing keeping him alive.

"The decision was you could take the woodchopper away. The man obviously was at death's door."

"We've just been operational for a couple of weeks. One woman at Wellesley is looking for responsa on women's rights. Someone in St. Louis wants to know about gambling in the

Eventually, Rosenbaum predicted, as many as 25 institutes around the country will hookups into the Bar-Ilan computer. By next year, he expects terminals to be set up at five or six institutions, including the University of Michigan, NYU, Yale and Columbia.

The Talmudic argument's responsa projects are only aspects of the institute's activities.

Rosenbaum's eight employees — all of whom have backgrounds in computers, education, as well as Jewish studies — also are developing programs for micro-computers for use in and out of the classroom. In Hebrew, Jewish history and other aspects of Jewish tradition.

In addition, they are developing standardized tests for Hebrew schools.

Rosenbaum admits, however, there is some resistance to the use of computers. "It's not so much on the part of the theology but on the part of the rabbis who said, 'This was good enough for our fathers...'" he said.

"At Bar-Ilan, they too group of the most prominent rabbis who said, 'What do we need computers for?' and he race like the steamboat and horse, and the computer was

"They gave them a topic they said, 'From your ledge, come up with all the questions on this subject. While rabbis did remarkably well they hit 70 or 75 percent — computer hit a 98 percent retrieval rate."

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**'Obsolete' jail fire kills seven**

United Press International  
JERSEY CITY, N.J. — Hudson County Jail, where seven inmates died in a fire, obsolete and a fire hazard of the victims needed more supervision because of their mental problems, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union says.

The ACLU already had a pending lawsuit against the jail, arguing it lacks sprinklers and smoke detectors.

"It is obsolete, overcrowded and a fire hazard," ACLU attorney Howard Moskowitz said.

In a news conference Tuesday, Capt. John Mullins of the Jersey City Fire Department said the victims of the fire Wednesday were found huddled in a corner of the eighth floor cell.

He said the burned cell was a mental ward. The victims' offenses ranged from smoking on a train to unlawful sex conduct.

"The horrible thing about the fire is the people (in the cell) had serious mental problems," Moskowitz said. "They're psychotic and schizophrenic and get particular attention or supervision."

Edward Rossiter, chief of investigations of the Hudson County prosecutor's office, refused to classify the cell as a psychiatric unit but County Executive Edward Clark said inmates in the cell suffered from "erratic behavior."

The fire broke out about 3 a.m. EST in a mattress in the cell, Rossiter said.

"It's obvious the mattress were burned," he said, but would not comment on whether the bedding was intentionally ignited.

Rossiter said an investigation into the fire would take "a day or two" to complete.

Nine guards and six prisoners were taken to Jersey City Medical Center and the guards and five prisoners were treated for smoke inhalation and released, said spokesman John White. The other prisoner was treated for a cut head.

About 100 others were treated inside the prison by medical personnel from the medical center.

Officials said a guard who was in the fire tried to open the cell door but was overpowered by smoke. He then rang a "panic button," alerting an operator on the main floor to an emergency.

The remaining 500 inmates in the prison, built in 1920 and hold 300, were not evacuated. More than 70 inmates housed on the damaged floor were temporarily moved to a third-floor gymnasium. Jail officials said inmates were transferred to Trenton State Prison.

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United Press International  
An ex-bus driver convicted of a crime, Stouffer's loves America, judge is a

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United Press International  
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Nader charges. The boo was written