

THE COMMENTATOR

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Tevi Troy, Presidential Historian and Former White House Official, Joins Straus Center

By RIKKI ZAGELBAUM

Tevi Troy, presidential historian and former United States deputy secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, joined the Zahava and Moshael Straus Center

said Halpern. “A charismatic, warm, and insightful lecturer who is excited to help mentor the next generation of shapers of government and public policy, he will undoubtedly bring much to the team, and we are excited to welcome him to the YU family.” Troy has served in several public policy

“Dr. Troy is a well-respected scholar who is a proud Modern Orthodox Jew. A charismatic, warm, and insightful lecturer who is excited to help mentor the next generation of shapers of government and public policy, he will undoubtedly bring much to the team, and we are excited to welcome him to the YU family.”

Rabbi Stuart Halpern, deputy director of the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought

for Torah and Western Thought as senior scholar and director of the Impact Office this fall.

As director of the Impact Office, Troy will mentor Straus students pursuing careers in politics, journalism and public affairs, will lead weekly reading groups, give courses on public policy and government and “help the Straus Center advance its goal of training the next generation of Modern Orthodox intellectual leaders,” Rabbi Stuart Halpern, deputy director of the Straus Center, told The Commentator.

“Dr. Troy is a well-respected scholar who is a proud Modern Orthodox Jew,”

positions throughout his career. In addition to being unanimously confirmed as deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services during the Bush administration, Troy has also served as deputy assistant for domestic policy to President Bush and domestic policy director for the House Policy Committee.

Aside from his personal experience in the executive branch, Troy has also studied the history of the White House. He has published several best-selling books about American politics, such as “What Jefferson Read, Ike Watched, and Obama Tweeted” and “Fight

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Tevi Troy, former U.S. deputy secretary of health and human services, joined the Straus Center this fall as impact officer director.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

From Central America to New York Courts: A YU Summer



Students on the YU trip to Central America this past summer

TOVA MILLER

By SARA COHEN

Summer can be a time for sunshine, adventure and enjoyment. However, it can also be about learning, gaining experience and personal growth. The latter perspective was adopted by the many YU students who participated in school-affiliated summer programs across the globe. To gain further insight, I spoke to several of them about their experiences.

Ma'ayan Tzur (SCW '24) participated in the Bar Ilan-YU summer research program, where she worked in a psychology lab at the well-known Israeli university. She, along with a few other students, studied whether depression is correlated with emotional congruence and if it can predict treatment outcomes. In addition to working in the research lab, Tzur's program offered Torah related opportunities, such as various *shiurim* and fun nighttime activities including cake wars and a comedy night. In Tzur's words, “The Bar Ilan program was an incredible opportunity to get hands-on experience learning about the research process, to have conversations with professionals about modern day scientific and Torah related topics, and to learn in *chaburot* and *shiurim*, with an amazing

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My Recent Trip to the UAE

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

There's More to YU Than the Papers

BY DOV PFEIFFER

As I start my senior year at YU, commencement and graduation are already on my horizon. My exit approaches at a time of remarkable turmoil, as, to an outsider, my campus experience probably feels as if it can be defined by the ongoing Pride Alliance lawsuit and the national attention it has drawn, especially in light of the Supreme Court appeal last year and the lawsuit's related fallout. Past years, too, have had their shares of controversy, some of which I have written about, though on a smaller scale. Looking at YU history through the student newspapers' archives paints a portrait dominated by large student events and frequent controversies. That is the written story of our YU experiences.

But those recorded highs and lows do not capture anyone's actual experience. One does not go to college in The Commentator. Much worth noting at YU that is not quite newsworthy. Both campuses offer impressive lineups of *shurim* and feature regular opportunities for academic and intellectual advancement. A typical week presents a wide array of club events offered, thanks to the hard work of invested students and the staff at the Office of Student Life. Most professors are excited by and interested in sharing their knowledge with students. These can and should be part of your experience, but you will rarely read about them in the papers.

More specific aspects of a YU experience will be more dependent on the individual. I share my own experiences here, believing that many others have similar stories. In my first year of YU, when I was going through a rough stretch, I went to my RA who was incredibly patient and friendly, and he helped me get the help I needed. His kindness helped me turn around my YU experience. This experience was no aberration, and I have met many similar people in this institution, individuals who have bettered my life and the lives of others with their grace and caring. But none of this is "newsworthy."

I have been in multiple situations

in a campus *beit midrash* where, upon a person's pencil box toppling over, several people immediately leapt from their seats to help pick everything up. In such moments, I truly believe in YU as a university that can epitomize *Torat Chesed*, a place where students reach out to one another with kindness. These little acts of caring, the

YU. I am bombarded with "harmonies and euphonies" of values, but inner feeling is dormant. To paraphrase the language of Psalm 42, I thirst for the spirit of the living God. The religious values promoted by the institution feel to me like sterile marketing, empty of this spirit. This emptiness will not be found in a news report.

The Commentator will report on and record the major happenings of YU for this coming year, as measured by a paper's standards of importance. But one's university experience will not be lived in words.

good deeds that can't be reported on, are a fundamental part of my YU experience, and my wish for all students here is to both experience them and pass this kindness on to others.

Now, of course, not all that goes unnoticed is positive. Negative aspects of YU also slink along without comment. While there are many students who are passionate about particular activities and topics, it seems we are at a low point in regards to student organization and activism. It is hard for me to tell if this is an issue of students not being interested or lack of administrative reception.

The idea of a broader, unified campus community also often appears absent. On Wilf, at least, it feels at best like religious subgroups tolerate each other's presence. At worst, there are clear tensions between different Jewish studies morning programs which occasionally result in mudslinging between the different factions. These tensions, like the kindness, tend not to make the campus news.

I have also felt, and this feeling only grows stronger over time, that despite the increasing visibility of religious motifs in the school's branding and talking points, the institution's values are distinctly hollow. Rav Soloveichik is quoted in "Shiurei HaRav" as saying "One who seeks harmonies and euphonies in the tunes of Jewish prayer is destined to disappointment. What can be found is stichic eruption of feeling" (p. 82).

I often feel along similar lines regarding oversaturation of values in

None of this is to diminish the importance of large events, of course. But large-scale activities are few and far between. Most of my time in YU is not spent waiting for the next big thing. Similarly, as significant and consequential as any controversy may be, they don't and shouldn't solely characterize one's experience. If I have a particularly distinctive YU memory to share, it is myself and several friends singing a strange medley of tunes including a history of the Soviet Union to the tune of Tetris in the lounge outside Pollak Library, not realizing our choir could be heard up to the third floor of the library and in nearby Glueck Beit Midrash.

The Commentator will report on and record the major happenings of YU for this coming year, as measured by a paper's standards of importance. But one's university experience will not be lived in words. One will find it in its entirety, the positives and negatives, the uplifting and the depressing, in the fullness of living in and investing in the institution. One will find it in the unusual and the unexpected. One will find it in the melange of major and minor occurrences in YU, in the kaleidoscopic treadmill of the daily grind and in the many not quite newsworthy moments.

THE COMMENTATOR

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The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 89 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

The Commentator staff claims students spanning the diverse spectrum of backgrounds and beliefs represented at Yeshiva.

We are united by our passion for living the ideals of Torah Umadda, and a commitment to journalistic excellence.

Read more at yucommentator.org



1

New Glueck Carpeting

New places to sleep & a nice clean space to bow during Aleinu



2

Double Shabbatons @ Dora Golding & Romimu

Unlike in Washington Heights, watch where you step when you smell skunk



3

New Year

Be prepared to welcome 5784 with open arms



4

Belfer Turns into Lanternfly Graveyard

Great stomping guys!!



5

The return of Torah with the Roshei Yeshiva on Beren

Monday night is easily the best night of the week



6

Remote Class Between Rosh Hashana & Yom Kippur

For all of you in-towners, the original plan was in person. That would have been extremely unfair to anyone whose home is not around the corner.



7

Elections this week!!

Are positions contested?

7 UP By Commentator Staff
NMOD 7

Zysman Scaffolding returns

Well, that lasted less than a week. What are they even doing there?!

1



Lawsuit Madness: One year on

September 14 is the first anniversary of the Supreme Court's ruling denying YU a stay in its suit with the YU Pride Alliance. September 16 is one year on from all clubs being frozen. All the club events that are happening this week would not have happened last year.

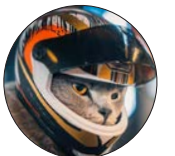
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The Motorcycle Gang Returns To Wilf

Wheelies. No helmets. (Learn from the cat, idiots!)

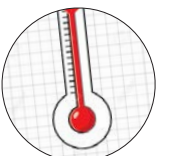
3



The September heat wave

What on earth is 94 degrees in the middle of September (hint, summer doesn't end until the equinox)

4



Katz Using 245 Lex

YU would never do this in Glueck.

5



Seven (7) days of remote classes

My attention span simply cannot

6



Mortgage Rates

Recent grad? Good luck affording a house.

7



Glueck Carpeting Resurfaced for First Time in Nearly a Decade

By ANDY KATZ

The carpeting in the Glueck *beit medrash*, Yeshiva University's main *beit*

medrash housing the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and most Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP) and Irving I. Stone Beis Medrash Program (BMP) shiurim, was resurfaced over the summer. The

carpeting, replaced due to deterioration of the previous carpeting, was last replaced eight years ago.

The work, covering the first and second floors of the Jacob and Dreizel Glueck Center

the carpeting of other *batei medrash*.

"We are pleased to upgrade the carpet in the Glueck Beit Midrash," Kalinsky told The Commentator, "and hope that it enhances the learning environment in the Beis



The Glueck *beit medrash* had its carpet resurfaced for first time in eight years.

JONATHAN LEVIN / THE COMMENTATOR

"[We] hope that it enhances the learning environment in the Beis Medrash as the beautiful words of Torah reverberate in the room throughout the day."

Dean of Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS) Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky

for Jewish Study, was funded through a donation by Dr. David Abersfeld, a dermatologist who practices in Rockville Centre, New York, with work overseen by YU's facilities department in July, Randy Apfelbaum, YU's Chief Facilities and Administrative Office told The Commentator.

The carpet for campus *batei medrash* are typically replaced relative to the wear and tear of the specific carpet in question, Dean of Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS) Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky told The Commentator. For example, the carpet in the Fischel *beit medrash* was last replaced more than 25 years ago. Given that carpeting in the other *batei medrash* are still in good condition, there are currently no plans for resurfacing

Medrash as the beautiful words of Torah reverberate in the room throughout the day."

The Glueck *beit medrash* was one of two campus *batei medrash* that had construction over the summer. Construction on the new Sephardic *beit midrash*, moved from its previous location to the main lounge in Morgenstern Residence Hall, was completed shortly before students arrived on campus and is now in use. There are also plans for a future renovation of the James Striar School *beit medrash* on the third floor of Furst Hall.

Abersfeld did not respond to a request for comment.

Yeshiva University Bans E-Bikes and E-Mobility Devices, Citing Fire Risk

By JONATHAN LEVIN

E-Bicycles, e-scooters and other e-mobility devices — excluding cars — powered by lithium-ion batteries were banned from Yeshiva University's graduate and undergraduate campuses at the start of the fall 2023 semester.

The ban, developed by the university's security, risk, legal and human resources departments, in conjunction with the Office of Student Life, was made due to the threat of fire from lithium-ion batteries in personal transportation devices, which have led to 14 deaths in New York City this year. The policy, similar to that of other universities in the city, went into effect Aug. 20.

The policy, which applies to all faculty, students, staff and visitors, allows for case-to-case exemptions for research or accessibility purposes, to be cleared through YU's security department.

Violators of the policy could face disciplinary action, including removal from university housing, and e-bikes or e-mobility devices found by university staff may be disposed of by university staff without reimbursement or notice, according to an announcement from YU's security department.

As of last month, there have been over 100 lithium-ion battery fires from e-bikes and e-mobility devices in New York City this year, leading to 14 deaths, including four caused by an e-bike fire between St. Nicholas and Amsterdam Ave on W. 190 St., a few minutes walk from Yeshiva University's Wilf Campus, last May.

Deaths from the first eight months of

2023 outpaced total deaths from 2022, when six people died and 147 were injured in a total of 220 lithium-ion battery-caused fires.

Many of the fires have been caused by batteries or chargers that fail to meet safety standards, and can lead to explosions as the battery fails. The fires, which burn at high temperatures and release toxic gasses, cannot be extinguished with water or fire extinguishers and often take hours to quell, as energy stored within the battery causes

the fire to be self-sustaining.

The difficulty in extinguishing lithium-ion battery fires and the threat of toxic gasses were all cited by the university as reasons for the ban.

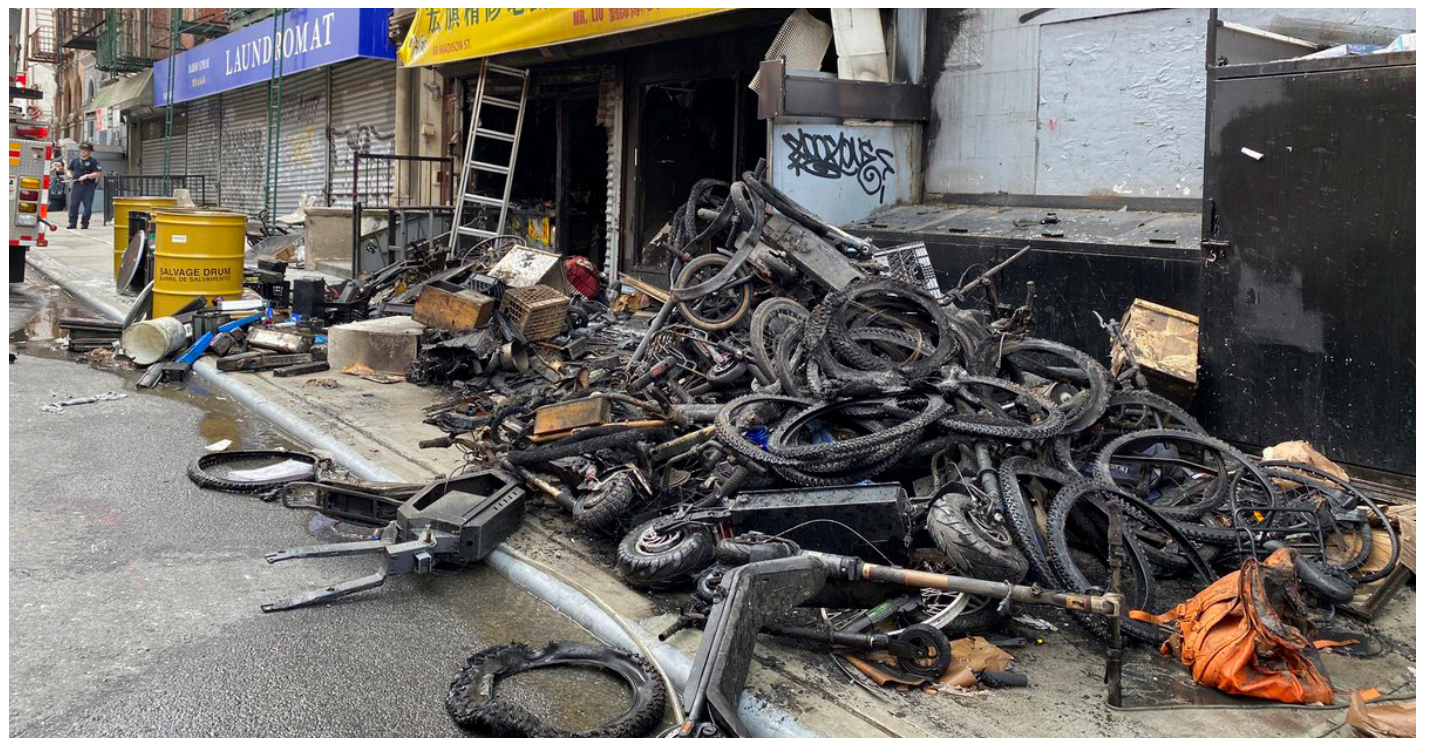
Other universities in New York, including New York University and Columbia University, have enacted similar policies.

The use of e-bikes and e-mobility devices rose during the pandemic due to increased demand for food delivery services and

demand for alternatives to public transportation. In the absence of regulations governing the safety of lithium-ion batteries sold in the city, many devices sold did not meet battery safety standards.

Legislation signed by Mayor Adams in March regulating such sales will go into effect Sept. 16.

YU's security department, which announced the new policy, did not respond to multiple requests for comment.



New York City Fire Department (FDNY) photo of the aftermath of a June fire that killed 4 in Chinatown. The fire was caused by a lithium-ion battery in an e-bike repair shop, according to the FDNY.

NEW YORK CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT

TEVI TROY

Continued from Front Page

House: Rivalries in the White House from Truman to Trump," which was listed among the Best Books of 2020 by the Wall Street Journal. Troy has also served as an adjunct fellow at the Hudson Institute, a contributing editor for Washingtonian magazine and a member of the publication committee of

National Affairs.

Troy also has deep ties to YU and the broader Jewish community. He is currently a member of the Board of Fellows of the Jewish Policy Center.

"Dr. Troy has spoken at numerous Straus Center events and conferences over the years, and he contributed to the Straus Center's book *Esther in America*," said Halpern. "As

a uniquely experienced professional who has served in the White House and authored numerous fascinating books and countless articles on both Jewish ideas and the intellectual tradition of America, he is a natural fit for the Straus Center."

"I am excited to have this opportunity to work with YU students and the Straus Center, my dear friends Rabbi Soloveichik

and Rabbi Halpern, and the rest of my new colleagues," Troy told The Commentator in a statement.

Other faculty members joining the Straus Center this fall include Yisroel Ben-Porat (YC '18) as the center's new programming and communications officer and Sarah Wapner, who is returning as impact officer after holding the position from 2020 to 2022.

Yeshiva University Appoints Randy Magen New Dean of Wurzweiler School of Social Work

By SALLY JARADEH

Yeshiva University announced the appointment of Randy Magen as dean of the Wurzweiler School of Social Work (WSSW), succeeding Interim Dean Ronnie Glassman.

“The committee members and I agreed that Dr. Randy Magen was the ideal candidate for the job. He is experienced, has high academic standards, and understands growth in academic programs and student enrollment. Dr. Magen, who is a good listener and a serious strategic thinker, also has a warm and winning personality.”

Selma Botman, provost and vice president for academic affairs

Magen has been a social work educator for over 30 years, working as assistant professor at Columbia School of Social Work, Professor and Associate Dean for Curriculum at University of Alaska Anchorage and Director and Professor at Boise State University School of Social Work.

The appointment, which took place in July, comes after a nearly two year search by a committee chaired by WSSW Senior Professor Nancy Beckerman for a permanent replacement for Dean Danielle Wozniak, who left the position in January 2022.

“The committee members and I agreed

that Dr. Randy Magen was the ideal candidate for the job.” Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Selma Botman told The Commentator. “He is experienced, has high academic standards, and understands growth in academic programs and student enrollment. Dr. Magen, who is a good lis-

tener and a serious strategic thinker, also has a warm and winning personality.”

As dean, Magen’s job entails ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of various programs and working with the faculty to provide direction, emphasize academic excellence, and meet the needs of the students. His job also includes building relationships with various organizations outside of the school, such as social work agencies and alumni.

Magen explained to The Commentator that he was attracted to YU because he was “impressed by how the school has been

working to deliver social work education through various formats and to many different communities.” He also stated that he feels he has been “warmly welcomed” in his new role, and that YU “has been the friendliest and most welcoming University I have ever been to.”

Magen also shared some of the aspects of his new role which he is most excited for.

“I’m excited to sit with students and learn more about their lives -- what brought them

here? What do they hope to do with their education? I’m excited to meet with faculty and talk about social work education -- how should we incorporate AI, for example, into the curriculum. I’m eager to figure out where we can build on the solid foundation that exists in Wurzweiler to meet the need for social workers.

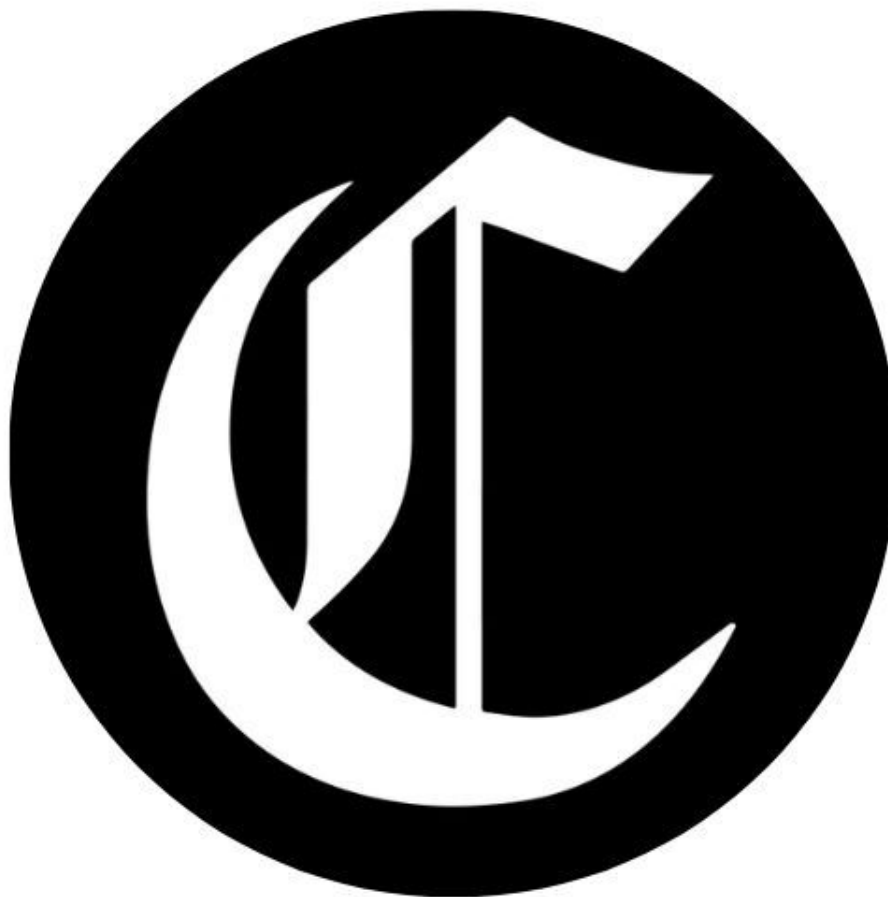
“I’m also a college basketball fan, so I’m looking forward to watching YU’s men’s college basketball team!”



Randy Magen was appointed as the new dean of Yeshiva University’s Wurzweiler School of Social Work this summer.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

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FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

September 12, 2001; Volume 67, Issue 2) – Shocked Students Respond to Devastation

By SHMULI SINGER AND KEVIN CYRULNIK

Editor's Note: Given that the nation is remembering the 22nd anniversary of 9/11, and since only a small porportion of the student body was even alive at the time, The Commentator thought it prudent to reprint how 9/11 was experienced on campus, right here in Manhattan, on that dark day.

"I feel like I'm watching a sick movie come to reality," remarked Yeshiva College Sophomore Joey Averbrook. His sentiment summed up the general reaction of Yeshiva's student body to yesterday's horrific terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. The disbelief that characterized initial feeling on campus soon shifted to shock, as students congregated in front of the Morgenstern and Rubin lounge televisions, where they watched the tableau of devastation unfold. Intermittent bursts of frenetic campus activity punctuated the day, as students organized tehillim rallies, blood drives and even a kumsitz.

As more students learned of the developing disaster, they trickled into the lounges from their dorm rooms and the beis medrash. More than 150 viewers were present in the Morgenstern lounge when the second of the Twin Towers collapsed to a sick groan from the crowd, which soon broke into a spontaneous emotional recitation of tehillim.

"I didn't see the first tower go, but when I watched the second one implode, everything hit me at once," recalled YC senior Avi Soroka. "When my whole conception of America as the place where this kind of thing just doesn't happen fell apart, I broke down and cried. I'm only happy that I was in YU surrounded by friends, which made it easier."

Mirroring what has taken place in Israel following the terror attacks of the past year, many students all across campus spent Tuesday morning on their cell phones, frenetically calling friends and relatives in the Wall Street area to find out if they were safe.

Some Yeshiva students heard of the worsening situation in the Main Beis Medrash, where Mashgiach Ruchani Rabbi Yosef Blau brought in students from the smaller batei medrash for a 15-minute tehillim session.

"I have never seen the beis medrash this full," remarked YC senior Yair Sturm. "It was packed. At one point, Rabbi Blau had

to stop the tehillim to ask the crowd to move further in to make space for the large crowd still outside waiting to get in."

By 10:45, the crowd in the bais medrash had thinned, as many students exited to get more details about the attack. Groups of people wandered around the campus discussing the day's events, while some remained in the lounges numbly watching CNN. Student leaders tried to galvanize the crowd in various ways. Some, like YC senior David Fishman attempted to organize a blood drive, while others planned a massive tehillim and Mincha prayer for the entire university.

The blood drive fizzled, as New York Blood Bank was unable to send a donation staff uptown. Enterprising students, led by Sy Syms Student Council President Mikey Davis, and Syms senior David Ratzker, headed down to Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital in an attempt to donate blood, but were turned away by the understaffed medical facility.

"We organized 20 people with the universal donor blood type, even though we had over a hundred volunteers," said Davis. "They couldn't handle us, but they told us to come back the next day. A blood drive may come to campus on Thursday."

The tehillim rally, in contrast, was an unqualified success, as the vast majority of uptown students and Roshei Hayeshiva gathered at 2:30 on Danciger Quadrangle to daven. Yeshiva President Rabbi Norman Lamm addressed the crowd, as did Yeshiva College Student Council President Lou Shapp. The crowd soon dispersed, though, and with many Yeshiva College and all Syms classes cancelled, students remained on the pedestrian mall beside an eerily empty Amsterdam Avenue, which had been closed to traffic by New York City police.

With students effectively stuck on campus, Shapp and other student leaders organized an evening hour-long "kumsitz" in the Rubin Lounge, led by Mikey Davis playing the guitar. The crowd sang slow, somber Carlebach and D'veykus tunes appropriate to the day's mood. While Shapp admitted that he could not gauge attendance, since participants continually drifted in and out of the room, Davis characterized the turnout as "a healthy crowd." Organizers also hastened to point out that Rosh HaYeshiva Rabbi Hershel Schachter had made a brief appearance at the kumsitz.

"People couldn't handle watching this stuff on TV all day," said Shapp, explaining the rationale behind the event. "We wanted

something that would get their minds off of the tragedy."

Dean of Students David Himber praised the student reactions to the disaster. "Although students felt anxiety about not being able to do more," he commented, "I'm very impressed with our students' demeanor and cooperation. They certainly rose to the occasion."

Some students' anxiety stemmed from more than an inability to help, however. Throughout the day, students criticized the university's relatively tight-lipped policy about class cancellations in Yeshiva College. "I had lots of students asking me about classes on Wednesday," complained one student leader, "and I could not answer them with any definite information other than the vague news written on the notices posted around campus." Other students complained about the lack of readily available constant security information. While disbelief and horror marked the catastrophe's start, confusion seemed to herald its entry into the second day.

Josh Strauss contributed to this article

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Commentator

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Shocked Students Respond to Devastation

By Shmuli Singer and Kevin Cyrulnik

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"People couldn't handle watching this stuff on TV all day," said Shapp, explaining the rationale behind the event. "We wanted something that would get their minds off of the tragedy."

Dean of Students David Himber praised the student reactions to the disaster. "Although students felt anxiety about not being able to do more," he commented, "I'm very impressed with our students' demeanor and cooperation. They certainly rose to the occasion."

Some students' anxiety stemmed from more than an inability to help, however. Throughout the day, students criticized the university's relatively tight-lipped policy about class cancellations in Yeshiva College. "I had lots of students asking me about classes on Wednesday," complained one student leader, "and I could not answer them with any definite information other than the vague news written on the notices posted around campus." Other students complained about the lack of readily available constant security information. While disbelief and horror marked the catastrophe's start, confusion seemed to herald its entry into the second day.

Josh Strauss contributed to this article

The Commentator Archives

THE COMMENTATOR

YU SUMMER

Continued from Front Page

group of people."

While Tzur was studying in a research lab, Gila Levy (SCW '25) was in Kiryat Malachi working with underprivileged children through Counterpoint Israel, a program in which students work with children from underrepresented communities in Israel. The community Levy worked in has a large Ethiopian population which provided her the chance to learn more about their culture and enabled the children to learn from her, especially since a primary goal of Counterpoint is to teach the children English.

"I had an incredible time, I don't think I could have gotten this experience anywhere else," Levy said, describing her summer and her time in Israel as a whole. "There is this sense of connection when you're volunteering and doing *chessed* in your home country, and YU being able to give me this opportunity was incredible."

Tova Miller (SCW '24) also spent her

summer giving back. Miller participated in the YU trip to Central America where YU students traveled to Central American countries like Guatemala to volunteer and to get involved with local Jewish communities. According to Professor Jill Katz, chair of

Europe generations ago, while the other consists of converts. The group spent time with both, and while most of the students do not speak Spanish, "A smile is a universal language," explained Miller. "You don't need anything else." In El Salvador, one of the

"There is this sense of connection when you're volunteering and doing chessed in your home country, and YU being able to give me this opportunity was incredible."

Gila Levy (SCW '25)

sociology and archaeology at Stern College for Women, the program was geared towards pre-health students and was a combination of volunteering, local involvement and touring.

There are two types of Jewish communities in Central America. One type is the more established Jews who emigrated from

female students gave *Divrei Torah*, which was the first time the women of this community had ever heard another woman present a *Dvar Torah*. They were blown away and inspired, Miller said. Looking back, Miller described her time on the program as "fun, inspiring, eye-opening, and really an experience I'll remember for the rest of my life."

I too had an unforgettable summer. I was a judicial intern in New York Family Court, an opportunity that I was able to have thanks to the YU pre-law program, which pairs students with New York judges to learn about the judicial system from an insider's perspective. Not only did I learn about the judicial process firsthand, I also encountered people from all walks of life and from all over the world. My time working under Judge Pamela Scheininger in family court gave me a greater appreciation of the Jewish community and helped me realize how lucky we are. I am so grateful to YU for enabling me to have this experience, a summer I will never forget.

What Does it Take to be an Orientation Leader?

By YOSEF BLUTH

Two weeks ago, I had the opportunity to work as an orientation leader, a job that was both incredibly fulfilling and some of the most fun I've had in my years at YU.

Work started Monday morning, Aug. 21, with training for orientation leaders which took the first few hours, and the rest of the day was spent preparing for the arrival of the first time on campus (FTOC) students.

By Tuesday afternoon, move-in was in full swing. Students had the chance to meet their RAs and receive move-in information. It was nice to start meeting people and welcome

the new students to campus, including many old friends. At around 9 o'clock we finally closed up for the night, and got ready for the fun to start.

Wednesday was the first day of orientation proper. During breakfast, I walked

began that day's sessions, the first of which was about all the different technological platforms at YU. It can be overwhelming as a FTOC to have to learn how to use all the various YU systems; I enjoyed having the opportunity to show the new students

to the new IBC students (as an IBC student myself, it felt like the natural decision). This was followed by a session with the Shevet Glaubach Center, then a mandatory session with security. The final session of the day explained the caf and all of the important people at YU.

The day ended off with dinner at the Radio Hotel, which was a really cool experience. As part of the dinner, there was a panel about Jewish influencers and podcasting, featuring Rabbi Dovid Bashevkin, Yaakov Langer and Yair Rosenberg. The panel was moderated by OSL Director Jonathan Schwab and was a great end to the day.

On Friday, I had a quick brunch with other students before heading to the US Open. We had the opportunity to watch Novak Djokovic, the #2 ranked player in the world, while he was practicing, and we also had the chance to watch a few matches, before heading back to YU to prepare for a wonderful first Shabbos of the year.

On Sunday, we continued helping FTOCs settle in before preparing for the annual barbecue in the afternoon, where we were able to just relax, enjoy the barbecue and welcome all our friends as they returned to YU.

Overall, I had a fantastic time at orientation. OSL was really pleasant to work for, the group of orientation leaders was superb, and I really enjoyed meeting all the new students. The sessions genuinely seemed helpful, and we were actually able to teach the FTOCs some important things. The off-campus activities were fun, and spending Shabbos with just the new students felt very special. The barbecue felt like a nice ending to the entire event, especially as I got to see my other friends as they moved in throughout the day.

I guess the best question is "Would I do it again?" Honestly, yes. There is absolutely no question in my mind that I would do it again if given the opportunity, and if all of this sounded fun or meaningful to you, then I would definitely recommend applying to do it next year!

Two weeks ago, I had the opportunity to work as an orientation leader, a job that was both incredibly fulfilling and some of the most fun I've had in my years at YU.

around the dining room with some other orientation leaders, and we helped the FTOCs plan which sessions to go to. At about 11, we

all of these systems that I had to figure out on my own.

After lunch we moved into some more



First time on campus (FTOC) students enjoying night activities at orientation

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Ask Abby

Q: Dear Abby,

I am writing this at 2:15 a.m. That's because I still haven't gone to bed. Before I came to college, I only stayed up this late on Shavuot, but now, I'm up every night and I wake up so late, I miss minyan. How can I get my sleep schedule in order?

Sincerely,
Very Much Up

A: Dear Very Much Up,

This column is reserved for people with real problems, not people who struggle with time management. Get yourself a planner and don't drink coffee too late into the evening.

Sincerely,
Abby

Every issue, Abby will offer advice to one or two reader-submitted questions. Readers are encouraged to submit questions to Abby they'd like advice for to askabby@yucomentator.org by October 8.

The Commentator reserves the right to edit all user submissions. Advice here is meant as satire and is not indicative of The Commentator's opinions. The Commentator does not take responsibility for the soundness of all advice offered in these pages.

optional sessions. For example, I gave a session on clubs with YSU President Zachary Notkin (YC '24) and Chief Justice Elishama Marmon (YC '24). I'm also running two clubs this semester, so between the three of us, we know a lot about how clubs and student organizations work, and were each able to present our own angles.

Later in the evening, there were five choices for fun night activities — seeing "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child" on Broadway, Top Golf, a Yankees game, a trip to American Dream mall, or ax throwing, which is what I did along with another orientation leader and six FTOCS. Since the Office of Student Life (OSL) had expected more people to sign up, they had reserved us a separate room, which allowed us to have several tournaments where we all competed against each other. We were there for a bit over two hours, and everyone had a great time.

Thursday morning was focused on the Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS) program. We heard introductory speeches from President Ari Berman and UTS Dean Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky, and then everyone broke into pairs for some learning. I spent this time showing a few students how to sign up for their morning programs. After that, the group split up and went to learn with some of the different rabbis. I joined the session that was being given by Rabbi Rofeh



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Bountiful Bodegas

By JEREMY BASSALI

Like many, I grew up in a largely Jewish, suburban neighborhood. Yes, it was on Long Island. And yes, there were multiple all-kosher grocery stores, each stocked with a wide array of produce and countless packaged products. When I moved to the Heights two years ago, it was difficult to *shlep* food from home. But how would I survive without my Persian cucumbers and seasonal fruit year-round?

Turns out, the local bodegas and fruit stands in Washington Heights make for a pretty sweet shopping experience. Shopping here is nothing like shopping in Great Neck or Teaneck or the Five Towns, but I've learned to make it a fun, exciting experience, and I think you can too.

For one, Washington Heights is home to a host of diverse communities, including a large Dominican community and different Jewish groups. Frequenting local establishments helps maintain a friendly, neighborly dynamic and creates a more pleasant neighborhood. When we integrate into the community, we help develop a culture where we are not perceived as "others". A strong sense of community between YU and the rest of the Washington Heights neighborhood benefits all of us.

By participating in this community, I've learned that Dominican culture is fun and warm. A couple of months ago, I saw a fruit vendor selling little berries I did not

recognize (and I eat fruits my friends didn't even know existed). I asked what they were, and he offered me a taste. He even laughed and let me off the hook when I made a grossed-out face after realizing the little berries were filled with slimy fruit goop. The local vendors are fun, inviting, and love

who has been complaining about not finding pears in any Washington Heights fruit markets. When I explained that they simply were not in season, he told me that the supermarket by his parents' house always had two or three pear varieties available. That's not how it works here in the Heights, or

a pre-made salad you buy in a shop, but it also makes a lot more financial sense. If you've seen me around campus, you've definitely caught me walking around with a baggie of kale or a tupperware container filled with leaves and cucumbers and all sorts of other stuff. So join the fun! Catch me at one of the local Washington Heights shops and I'll show you around.

When I shop for fresh produce on Erev Shabbat, I know exactly which shops have the freshest greens, which has the good fruits, and which sells those funky cactus leaves for the best price.

sharing their culture with us. Those with Sephardic parents or grandparents may see some similarities in character and cuisine between the Dominican population and what they're used to back at home, and everyone with a Jewish mother can appreciate the motherly care an elderly Dominican woman provides when she sees that you don't know how to pick fruit properly.

Not only does local shopping benefit us as shoppers and neighbors, it also supports local businesses, which is always a good thing to do. So go ahead, and shop at the corner store for your favorite cereal or the oranges on sale. I highly recommend the fruit shop on the corner of St. Nicholas and 183rd. The sidewalk is lined with barrels of fresh wonders. You can't miss it.

Still, even the larger produce shops don't always carry the fruits we are familiar with. We're used to supermarkets having everything we need in one place. I have a friend

almost anywhere else. Produce is largely seasonal. It can be inconvenient, but it's also an adventure. When I shop for fresh produce on Erev Shabbat, I know exactly which shops have the freshest greens, which have the good fruits, and which sell those funky cactus leaves for the best price. It's not a one-stop-shop if you're shopping for a variety of products, but it's an experience that many of us were not accustomed to growing up, and it's nice to try shopping a bit differently.

Shopping locally also helps save money. Some local shops have slightly higher prices to help pay their rent and make ends meet. Nevertheless, there are tons of fairly priced products sold in bodegas and produce stores on St. Nicholas and Audubon Ave, and they often beat the prices at larger chain stores. It goes without saying that chopping up and throwing together your own homemade salad is not only more delicious than



A local fruit market

Are We Scared of the Humanities?

BY REBECCA GUZMAN

As the new semester begins, allow me to offer a word of advice for anyone wishing to ask a humanities major what they plan to do with their degree: give them the space to answer. What I mean by this is that when you are speaking with someone who is majoring in a subject such as English or history, please don't fill in their pauses with your own preconceived notions of what is possible. Well-meaning people will sometimes offer me a lifeline when I falter after saying I'm an English major: "Oh, so you want to teach?" I don't want to teach. In fact, I know exactly what I want to do, but now I'm afraid to say so.

The humanities are in a state of decline — this is something we all know, and though this has been true for the past decade, we are talking about it a lot more now. But this is not an article about the importance of studying the humanities, or how crucial art is for the development of young thinkers like us. This is an article about how college should ideally be, and how "career" is often a destination that can distract us from our present interests and passions. I'm not unaware of the importance of planning for your future, for allowing yourself career opportunities and the security that comes along with such achievements. But I think we lose something special when we focus solely on that one aim. This is our one chance to learn whatever it is we want, to fly closer to the flames that draw us in, regardless of how risky it may seem.

It's a scary thing to admit, as an English major, that I want to write professionally in the future. When people ask me why I chose writing specifically, I joke that if I had been as naturally predisposed to any other field, I would have chosen it instead. I've gotten used to the blank stares and the

yourself fascinated by the research you're doing for a history paper, then lean into that fascination. Right now, we are able to be uninhibited in our devotions; we are able to study the things that excite us without pressing responsibilities weighing us down. The very notion of *Torah Umadda* suggests

be no "Walden" produced in this era, and that the cubicles of skyscrapers will fill as the writing desks empty. But this moment is fleeting, and once that coveted office job is yours, an investment in your passions will be almost impossible to maintain. So for now, if you can, follow that little voice in your head that wants to learn something different. Wonderful things can happen when you do.

If you've found yourself fascinated by the research you're doing for a history paper, then lean into that fascination. Our interests will not be open to us forever, at least, not in the way they are right now.

slow, tight smiles that follow my confession, but I haven't gotten used to the fear that builds within me whenever I realize that any creative practice is indefinite. "Does it bother you that a robot could do your job now?" someone asked me recently. As a first-generation American, this fear intensifies when I remember the significance of my station as a college student. But that's the thing — I'm a college student. My parents, who have impressed upon me the equal importance of career and passion for my entire life, want me to study what I love. And they want me to find a way to make money doing what I love. I've been lucky, I won't deny it — the thing I am best at is the only thing I have ever wanted to do.

But for those who find themselves hesitating, those who whisper in the doorway of a writing class that they might love it, please nurture those feelings. If you've found

that we make ourselves into well-rounded individuals, Jews who embrace the physical and secular world for its meaningful offerings, the things that will broaden our minds and souls. As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in his essay "The American Scholar," "is not, indeed, every man a student, and do not all things exist for the student's behoof?" To further Emerson's point, this institution is replete with opportunities for our intellectual advancement, but whether we retreat from them out of fear or pursue them with bravery is a choice that belongs to each of us.

The finish line will always be there. It is fixed, unmoving, but the race is all about motion and change. In a world that associates success with money and prestige, the finish line seems to be all that matters. We are told to keep running, to move faster, to chase and pursue the end until we are left depleted. Perhaps it is true that there will



Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in his essay "The American Scholar," "Is not, indeed, every man a student, and do not all things exist for the student's behoof?"

NATHAN DUMLAO / UNSPLASH

From *Farhud* to Friendship: My Recent Trip to the UAE

By JACQUELINE ENGLANOFF

In June of 1941, my *savta*, then an eleven-year-old girl, sat by the window at the top of her grandparent's home in Baghdad and watched as the people of her city ransacked her home down the road. She recounts how her parents had to cover her mouth and hold in her screams as she watched a man run off with a basket full of her beautiful dresses. What saved her and her family from the chaos of the *Farhud* was one Muslim neighbor who stood at the doorstep of their home proclaiming, "To get to them, you'll first have to get through me," and protected the Jewish family. When they eventually returned to their home they found it empty, and whatever did remain was smashed to pieces.

My *savta* often shares stories like these about her childhood in Iraq, especially the beauty and the wonderful life they had. She happily lived on a family compound where all of her cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents enjoyed their time together. Her father was a professor of languages at the local university, and she was the only Jewish woman selected to attend the Royal Medical College her year.

My grandmother is proud of her origins, her family's life in Iraq and their journey to Israel. But for me, these stories and events led to a relationship of mixed emotions, significantly tainted by the way that my grandparents had to leave. Given my family's experience, I felt that while the Jews once had a place in the Arab world, the tides turned, leaving us no place there.

This way of thinking remained and progressed until 2020 with the historic announcement and signing of the Abraham Accords. This development made me realize that if diplomatic ties are possible between the Jewish State and Muslim states in the Arab world, then maybe the tides are turning

again. Still, the sudden boom in Israeli and Jewish tourism to the UAE was shocking: These people must be crazy for trusting that they will be safe as openly Jewish individuals in a Muslim state!

Yet, when presented with the opportunity to join a historic delegation of Yeshiva University professors and students to the UAE, I knew I could not decline. Thanks to the Rabbi Arthur Schneier Program for International Affairs at YU, I participated in

Yeshiva University and the Mohamed Bin Zayed University for Humanities in Abu Dhabi. The first-of-its-kind conference was a display of how intellectual pursuits of the past and present are built off of one another and reflect our interacting values. While the presentations were insightful, the most meaningful moments of the night came from meeting and speaking with two Emirati students from the MBZ University. My two new friends are studying Hebrew at the univer-

us to focus on the person for who they are and how they act.

Another government project which serves as a direct testament to the Emirati commitment to tolerance is the new Abrahamic Family House. Based in Abu Dhabi, the center contains religious prayer houses from the three Abrahamic religions — Judaism, Christianity and Islam. What struck me the most while visiting was not only how they have created a space for the intersection of faith, but also for personal relationships and interactions. While speaking to the rabbinic couple of the Moses Ben Maimon Synagogue, Rabbi Ben and Rabbanit Yael De Toledo, it became evident that as leaders they have cultivated strong friendships with the other religious leaders, including the resident priest and imam. In this sense, the opening of the Abrahamic Family House is not just a statement and project of connecting our faiths and houses of worship, but a vehicle of connecting individuals based on our unique but intertwined pasts.

Most astonishing was the celebration of *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, the first celebration of Israeli Independence Day in the UAE, hosted by the Israeli embassy. Here, we witnessed the materialization of peace as Israelis and Jews mingled with the Emirati guests and the other foreign dignitaries discussing their ever-increasing collaboration. The most moving moment, however, was hearing both national anthems, *Hatikvah* and *Ishy Bilady*, sung together by the famous Israeli and Emirati singers, Nicole Raviv and Ahmed Alhosani, profoundly demonstrating the newfound but strong bond between the UAE and Israel.

At that moment I had to remind myself where I was standing. Not only are we Jews standing in the UAE, but we are proudly celebrating the Jewish State, and most of all, we are not doing it alone; we are side by side with Emirati dignitaries, lay leaders and religious leaders. Here was a great example of the "cousins" reuniting. Later, when another Israeli singer, Miki Gavrielov sang "*Ani Veata Neshane et HaOlam*" — that you and I will change the world, I realized that even though every one of us might not broker the next Abraham Accords, we can still make a difference in creating relationships that foster a better environment. Looking around, I felt empowered, comforted and as if I had now added another "point of reference" to my conception of the Jewish place in the Arab world.

My experience as a part of this historic delegation from Yeshiva University has drastically changed my perspective of the relationship between Jews and the Arab world. I will forever be grateful that I witnessed such monumental changes in global political, religious and social circles. So, while in the past my *savta* told me stories of religious persecution, exile and antagonism, today, I tell *her* a different narrative — one of tolerance, cooperation and friendship based on honoring our commonalities and our differences.

Not only are we Jews standing in the UAE, but we are proudly celebrating the Jewish State, and most of all, we are not doing it alone; we are side by side with Emirati dignitaries, lay leaders and religious leaders.

a two-day trip that impacted my perspective on the role of Jewish people in the Arab world as I built off of my personal story as a Mizrahi Jew.

One of the most memorable moments was touring the exhibits at the Crossroads of Civilizations Museum in Dubai. While the museum serves as a center for many cultures of the world, there is a special focus on Judaism with both Holocaust and ancient Israel exhibits. Moreover, there are some parts of the museum centered on the bond between Judaism and Islam. One gallery contained a "Magic Bowl" from late 19th century Oman, written in Arabic with Hebrew and Aramaic calligraphy, an artifact from a cultural healing routine where Jews and Muslims would pray on each other's behalf. More contemporary was a framed Jewish prayer for the welfare of the government and military of the UAE, written in Arabic, Hebrew and English, representing a return to the camaraderie between both groups.

Later that night, the museum hosted a special event titled "Interacting Philosophies, Shared Friendships" in partnership with

city, and we were able to converse about our studies, our schools, our personal lives, our religions and our languages, all while speaking in Hebrew! When I mentioned my surprise at discovering how similar the Hebrew and Arabic languages are, one of my new friends pointed to a big painting depicting a Jew and a Muslim sitting on a bench with the words "cousins meetup" written across the top. We are two peoples, but as the museum, the beautiful event between our universities and my new friends all highlighted, we are still people with a deep history and future of learning from and growing with one another.

Where does this positive sentiment towards Jews emanate from? The government certainly plays a large role with its progressing universal principles and tolerance. One of the women working at the Ministry of Tolerance translated for us a verse in the Quran which motivates her work — "There is no difference between us other than our good deeds" — emphasizing that tolerance for different religions, ethnicities and genders allows



YU students at the Crossroads of Civilizations Museum in Dubai with founder Ahmed Obaid Al Mansoori

JACQUELINE ENGLANOFF

A Reason to Reread

By RIVKA KRAUSE

I do not have a clear memory of the first time I opened a book. My father, a voracious reader, must have read to me early on in my childhood, but those memories are foggy. At some point, a major facet of my identity became my love of literature. It must have happened gradually, because over time the pile of books in my room grew, seemingly of its own accord. As I have gotten older, and the pile more diverse, I have found myself rereading novels.

Sometimes I pick up a novel that I have not read in years, and somewhat like old friends whose friendship has suffered due to long distance and not malice, we rekindle with ease. Other times, it's that awkward small talk that occurs between you and your middle school best friend (you know so much about who they used to be, but seemingly nothing about who they are now.) But whenever I am in the midst of rereading, my little brother asks the most obvious question: "Why read something again?"

In his "Lectures on Literature," Russian-American novelist Vladimir Nabokov argues that "one cannot *read* a book: one can only reread it. A good reader, a major reader, an active and creative reader is a rereader." Nabokov believed that the physical action of scanning a page detracts from the experience of understanding the text, and only through subsequent readings can missed meaning be attained. While I agree that we understand texts better after multiple readings, I do not believe that to reread is to read. More than anything, I have found that rereading highlights the passage of time.

As religious people, we are deeply familiar with the process of rereading. Religious

Jews engage in ritualistic rereadings at set times throughout the year. Every Shavuot we return to Ruth, and every Yom Kippur to the story of Yonah. In these cases it is evident why we do so — these texts evoke a series of emotions or sentiments that are relevant to the holiday on which they are read. But also, returning to a text helps us

As I go through the motions of opening a novel again, I am deeply conscious that I have done this before, and somewhere in a parallel time I sit, doing this same thing but for the first time.

understand how we have changed since our first encounter with it.

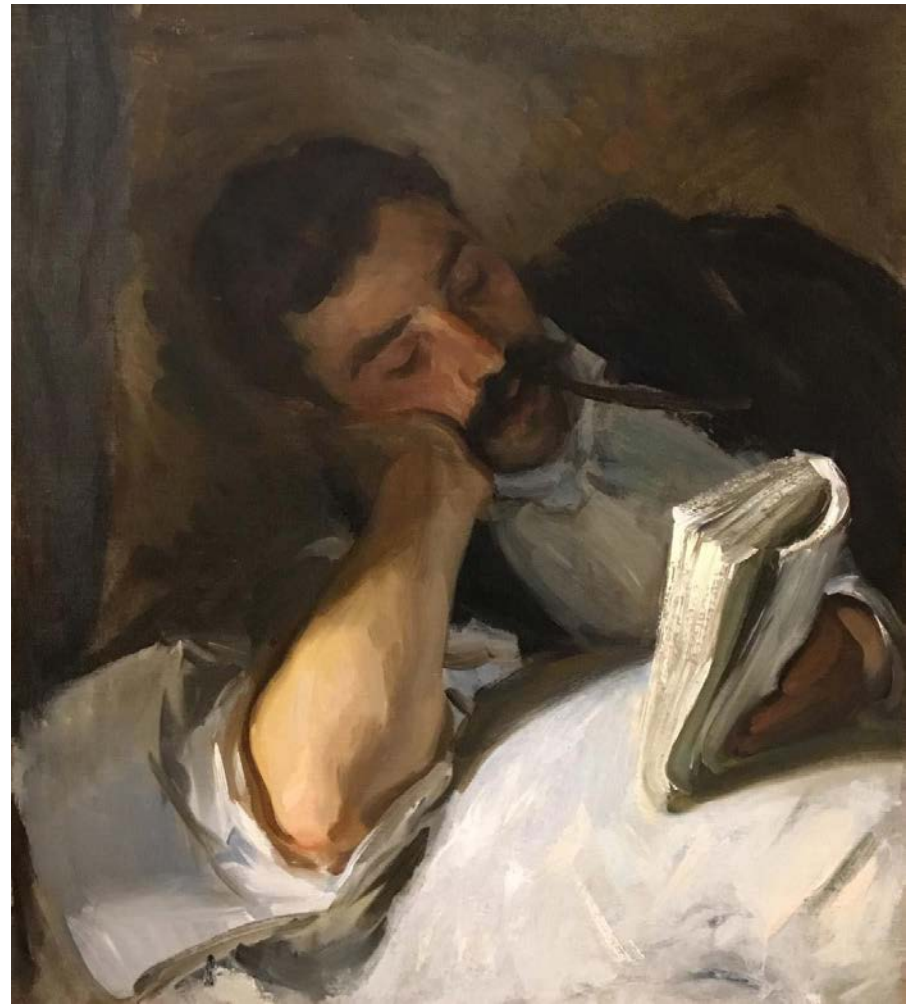
While I have not formed ritualistic relationships with the novels I reread, I find that there is great power in returning to them. I find joy in the repetition. As I go through the motions of opening a novel again, I am deeply conscious that I have done this before and somewhere in a parallel time I sit, doing this same thing but for the first time. However, unlike me and everything else in my life, the book in my hand is unchanged. The moored nature of literature lends itself to a sense of security and familiarity. This feeling is especially poignant when rereading novels from childhood.

I want you to think back to a book that you loved in high school. It can be any genre, but preferably fiction. If you can, take the copy that you have off of your bookshelf, ignore the cries of your to-read pile, and see what

happens. You may be shocked by the familiar setting, and the way that the characters feel like old friends. Or you may find that whatever originally piqued your interest no longer does it for you, which is also fine. I urge you to try, because ultimately all art is a light stretching from the past in an attempt

to illuminate our present. And sometimes returning to an old source of illumination can spark something in our souls.

As we enter the new year, I intend to return to the stories that shaped me. If you reread a novel, drop me a line — I'd be happy to hear about that experience.



A reader

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