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My Dear Friends,

How do we celebrate Purim this year when our hostages are still being held in captivity and our soldiers are still risking their lives battling against Hamas? How do we bring the joy of salvation when so much of the world seems to have turned against Israel and rising antisemitism threatens Jews worldwide? Should our annual celebrations be more sober? While there might be no one correct response to these questions, the direction we are taking at Yeshiva University might be instructive because it is fueled by our core Torah values.

This year we are not simply celebrating Purim, we are living it. We are like the Jews in Shushan who suddenly, after years of living comfortably in the Diaspora, have witnessed safe environments become menacing, especially on college campuses. Suddenly, much of the broader public seems to be unable to discern between Haman and Mordechai, Hamas and Israel, and the distorted picture traditionally realized through total inebriation defines our current reality.

In the story of Purim, Mordechai beckoned Esther to intervene and thwart the evil decree to annihilate the entire Jewish people: "For if you persist in staying silent at this time, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, while you and your father's house will be lost. And who knows if you have come to your royal position for this very moment?" Through his wisdom, Mordechai reassures Esther—and us—that the continuity of our people is never in question. The Divine

Presence has safeguarded our narrative across the ages. The adversary may change but our ultimate redemption is perennial.



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The pivotal question is not about the fate of the Jewish people; it is about our personal legacies. What role will each of us play in the saga of our time? Will we be passive spectators, or will we step forward to stand for the Jewish people, and embody the resilience and moral courage that have defined our story since time immemorial?

We will win this war. I do not know how and I cannot predict the course it will take, but I am confident in our ultimate victory. But faith alone is not enough. The rabbis teach that Purim has parallel themes to Yom Kippur; Yom ki-Pur is a day like Pur-im. On Yom Kippur, our people are written into the Book of Life; on Purim, we write our lives into the Book of our People.

Just as Mordechai invited Esther, so does Hashem invite all of us right now to respond to the call of history. I am deeply proud of our YU students who are responding to the call of history every single day since October 7th. With prayer, conviction, and action. This is our mission. They are our future.

This year we are changing the tone and the Purim playlist from levity and revelry to faith, unity and personal responsibility. May we soon experience the true joy of seeing our hostages and soldiers return safely home.

Purim Sameach,

Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman
President, Yeshiva University



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