



My Dear Friends,

Happy Chanukah to you and your family.

This past week, on the second night of Chanukah, I had the privilege of lighting the Menorah at the Western Wall and addressing the Israeli public on live national television. Following Prime Minister Bennett who lit at the Kotel on the first night of Chanukah, I felt the distinct privilege of representing the bridge between Diaspora and Israeli Jewry as the President of the flagship Jewish university.



Standing in the place that the Maccabees over two thousand years ago found that one vial of oil after their miraculous victory, in the place that Solomon built his Temple and Abraham bound Isaac – returned me to my roots and inspired me with a sense of responsibility to the future. This is the place that my great grandparents who were trapped behind Nazi lines never had a chance to see but dreamed of throughout their lives. And this is the place where my son stood after his basic training to be inducted into his Army unit in Tzahal.

Lighting the second candle at the Kotel in the modern state of Israel carries a dual message that rests at the heart of Chanukah and is the underlying mission of the Jewish people: continuity and progress.

The story of Chanukah is most often viewed through the lens of continuity. The victory of the Maccabees against the mightier army and the flame's denial to be dimmed represents a model of success that is realized through resilience—a refusal to be extinguished. And this alone would be reason enough to celebrate, light a candle in the window, and let all know of our ability to shine against all odds and probabilities.

But this is not the end of the Chanukah story. For continuity alone is not enough. We need to increase light, to grow. And we do this, not for ourselves but for others. So, starting with the second night and onwards we place an additional candle and face them outwards, so that all can see and benefit.

Continuity is necessary and essential but not enough. Our mission is about progress and bringing more light into this world. Chanukah represents continuity through growth. Each successive lighting becomes brighter, every generation becomes stronger.

At YU, this dual message of continuity and progress is who we are – deeply rooted and forward focused. The continuity of our multi-millennial tradition shapes our identity and fuels us with meaning; advancing our community and society forward gives us purpose.

And this has been our experience over these past number of years. Continuity of our educational mission and significant growth in our outcomes. It is such an exciting time at YU: rising in academic reputation reflected in our rise of 29 places in the U.S. News & World Report rankings in just two years; rising in the number of Graduate Degrees with over 20 new programs and a 60% increase in net tuition revenue over the last four years; rising in year-to-year philanthropy almost tripling our annual cash and commitments numbers. (For more information, [click here.](#))

With our students back on campus, getting great jobs and becoming the leaders of tomorrow, Yeshiva University is on the rise. And all these expressions of YU's rise upwards leads up to this year's virtual Chanukah dinner in which we will unveil a major announcement about our future. It will be an incredible evening and I encourage you all [to join and be a part of it.](#)

And this feeling of continuity and progress was deeply felt that night at the Kotel. Lighting the candles at this historic place to which the Jewish people have once again returned, as President of the top tier Jewish university that is proudly and publicly Zionist, whose students and alumni live, work, and contribute to the

Jewish community and broader society all across the globe—I felt the comfort of this place, the joy of this place, and the inspiration of this place. It reminded me that miracles did not just happen to us in the past, but they are happening to us today as well, *ba'yamim haheim ba'zeman hazeh*.

We celebrate today not just our past victory but the enormous opportunity the future represents for our people as we educate our students to be the lights in our windows—adding brightness, joy, and love as they sanctify God's name in the world – yesterday, today and forever.

Happy Chanukah,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ari Berman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman

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