



My Dear Friends,

It is so wonderful to welcome back our undergraduate students to our campus. It was especially fitting that this week we are reading the Torah portion of the story of Noah and the flood. During the flood, Noah sat in the ark waiting for a renewed world. In that cold and darkened world, how did the ark receive light? There were two ways, our commentators point out, that Noah's ark was illuminated. One way was through a window. When the sun was out, the windows allowed sunlight into the ark. The other way was through an illuminated stone that provided, almost like a lightbulb, an independent source of illumination.



Torah, specifically, and education in general is both a window and a light. A window into one's soul, and a light that illuminates the world. "Man's soul is the Lord's lamp which searches our innermost spaces" (Proverbs 20:27). Earnest inquiry, which both prods and expands, not only reveals truth but also reveals new aspects of ourselves. Each of us are created differently, all in God's divine image, and our studies develop what is unique about ourselves. But the goal of our studies is

not simply self actualization, but contribution. To apply our distinct qualities with compassion and kindness. To be a light to others and illuminate the world.

Moving back to campus this week represents so much more than simply a physical relocation of our students. It represents a continuation of our sacred mission. It represents our commitment to our students, to our past and to the future. This week, I saw the windows and lights shining from our students' studies illuminating themselves and, in turn, a darkened world.



There are so many people to thank who have been working day and night for months to make this reopening a reality. A special note of appreciation goes to our students. Our student leaders, newspaper editors and writers, RA's and volunteers and everyone who helped collaborate to develop our plans. This is an iterative process, which continuously will be updated as the situation evolves. And especially for the way in which all of our students are carefully and sensitively maintaining the social distancing and mask protocols that will keep us all safe. We are all pulling together to make our sacred mission a reality.

Wishing you a Shabbat Shalom,

Ari Berman





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Office of the President, Yeshiva University  
2495 Amsterdam Avenue, Belfer Hall 12th Floor  
New York, NY 10033

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