

Outlook

[Staff-fac-wilf] 100th Hanukkah Dinner: The Light Grows

From Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, President, Yeshiva University <president@comms.yu.edu>

Date Sun 12/22/2024 7:07 PM

To staff-fac-wilf@lists.yu.edu <staff-fac-wilf@lists.yu.edu>

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Yeshiva University
Office of the President

My Dear Friends,

The times we live in demand vision, courage, and unity. Together, we stand at an inflection point in history—for the Jewish people, for America, and for humanity. Across the world and particularly on college campuses, we are witnessing levels of antisemitism not seen in decades.

Yet, as Jewish history teaches us, the seeds of redemption are sown in times of disruption. It is in these very moments that our light shines brightest, illuminating a path forward and filling us with strength and purpose.



[Click here](#) or above for a recap of the Centennial Hanukkah Dinner

This past week, we came together for a truly historic milestone: the 100th Anniversary of Yeshiva University's Hanukkah Dinner. The evening honored our remarkable past, celebrated our vibrant present, and charted a bold course for our future. It was an extraordinary testament to the unwavering dedication of those who have built YU into what it is today—a beacon of light rooted in academic excellence and values-based education.

Together, we reached an incredible achievement, bringing in over \$100 million in our Centennial Hanukkah Dinner campaign which started at the beginning of the semester in September. These donations bring our Rise Up campaign that we launched just three years ago to \$520 million moving us closer to our ambitious \$613 million goal.



[Click here](#) or above for video: 100 Years of Light

The Dinner began with an unexpected announcement by dinner co-chair Daniel Loeb of an extra \$1 million gift toward the campaign. Additional gifts included a \$6 million contribution from Chella Safra and her family for student scholarships and to endow a new university professorship; a \$5 million endowment gift from Bill Ackman; a \$11 million donation from Moshael and Zahava Straus to expand the Zahava and Moshael Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought; \$15 million from the Morris Bailey and Joseph Jerome families to support the launch of Yeshiva University's new College of Dental Medicine; and a transformative \$36 million gift from the Wilf family for scholarships for our students as the leaders of tomorrow.

This success reflects the incredible power of partnership and the deep belief in YU's essential mission, as we instill in our students the courage to lead, serve, and carry the light of the Jewish people forward, even in the darkest times.

At the heart of the evening were two visionary honorees whose leadership has left an indelible mark on Yeshiva University. Chella Safra, a new member of YU's Board of Trustees, received an honorary doctorate in recognition of her unparalleled dedication to Jewish education and philanthropy. The Wilf Family, iconic figures in philanthropy, sports, and business, were awarded the Centennial Medallion for their enduring commitment to advancing Jewish values and leadership.



For brief excerpt of Rabbi Berman's Centennial Address [click here](#) or above. To see his full address [click here](#). To watch the surprise announcement of the evening [click here](#)

Today, Yeshiva University stands as a global leader and a powerful presence on the world stage. With 11 undergraduate and graduate schools across four campuses and over 70,000 alumni worldwide, YU is shaping the future with groundbreaking programs. Over the past seven years, graduate enrollment has doubled, and this year marks the largest total undergraduate student body in a generation. Initiatives like the Honors Leadership Society are attracting the brightest young leaders, empowering them to bring hope, strength, and moral clarity to our society and our world.

Chanukah reminds us of an eternal truth: while enemies may come and go, they will never extinguish our flame. Amid the upheaval of our world, Yeshiva University is a light for the Jewish people and for all humanity—built on a century of visionary leadership, we are a shining example of what faith, education, and greatness can accomplish together.

Thank you for traveling with us on this extraordinary journey. Together, we are building a brighter tomorrow—one filled with optimism, resilience, and boundless promise for generations to come.

Wishing you and your families a joyous and meaningful Chanukah,

Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman
President, Yeshiva University



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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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