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Yeshiva University  
Office of the President



From the desk of  
**Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman**

My Dear Friends,

This year it is more difficult to celebrate redemption, knowing that our brothers and sisters remain in captivity, our soldiers are still in harm's way, Israel is being threatened and antisemitism is rising in America and throughout the world.

But rather than detracting from the seder, appreciating our current reality amplifies its significance.

At the beginning of the seder, right before we begin to tell the story, we break the middle matzah (Yachatz), setting aside the larger piece as the Afikomen to which we will return at the conclusion of our meal. While this is a source of delight for the children, as it begins their game of hide and seek with its promise of future presents, the ritual carries great meaning for us today.

It reminds us that there are times in our lives in which we feel broken. Hardships, disappointments, losses, both small and large, some seemingly unbearable. This is of course the nature of the human condition. And the lesson of the seder is that the response to our natural vulnerability is to have faith in the future and to believe with conviction that the best is still yet to come.

All throughout our lives we search for the afikomen. We seek joy and meaning, personal fulfillment and accomplishment. We aspire to contribute to something greater than ourselves, to give back to the next generations and to leave this world

in somewhat of a better place than when we arrived. And all throughout our lives, we have afikomen moments, in which we feel less broken and more at one with ourselves, with others and with God.

The flow of the Seder night reflects the flow of our years. We start the night with the fracture and end with the healing, and in between we tell an intergenerational story that was passed down to us by our parents, grandparents and ancestors, and that we in turn pass down to our next generations. A foundational story of salvation in a time of servitude, of faith in freedom and in God who infuses our lives with meaning.

With Yachatz, the seder teaches us that the first step to wholeness is by acknowledging when we are broken. And as great as it is to find your own afikomen, there is no greater joy then when your children find theirs.

This past week, I am happy to share, I was blessed to personally feel this experience. A few days ago, my daughter Tamar got engaged to a wonderful young man from Israel. Anita and I flew to our home in Israel to be with the new young couple. Watching their happiness has brought us overflowing joy. They have found their other halves. It was their afikomen moment. Celebrating with them in my backyard in the Judean hills was not only one of the great moments of joy in my life but also a realization of the prophecies of old stated at a time of complete desolation and seeming hopelessness for the exiled Jewish people: “In the cities in Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem .... the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of the bride and groom, will once again be heard. (Jeremiah 33:10-11)”



Dancing with my daughter at her [engagement party](#)

As the Jewish people as a whole and Israel in particular address the challenges of today, I have complete confidence that we will ultimately emerge victorious. With the lessons of Passover to guide us, we will ward off our enemies, cultivate new friends and remain true to our mission. Most of all, we will transmit this message of hope and promise to our next generations.

This is why all of us who contribute to the mission of Yeshiva University find such great meaning in our efforts. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing the next generation of leaders being educated broadly and inspired with great purpose. Our thousands of undergraduate and graduate students are the leaders of tomorrow who are driven by our core values to make a difference and positively contribute to the world.

May this Pesach bring peace to Israel and America, the safe return of our hostages, and safety for our soldiers. May our homes overflow with love, joy, and the peace that comes from unity and shared purpose.

My warmest wishes for a Chag Sameach,



Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman  
President, Yeshiva University



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