



## Yeshiva University

Office of the President

My Dear Friends,

This Yom HaShoah will be one I will never forget.

I am returning now from Dubai after addressing the first ever Holocaust Remembrance Day event in an Arab country. This event was the outgrowth of years of work on the ground by a small but very committed Dubai Jewish community as well as high level political work in the government to establish the Abraham Accords. The commemoration was historic in that it signals a change not just between two countries but between two peoples, in which Jews and Muslims can gather and mourn together, focusing on their common humanity and their joint commitment to build a more cohesive future.

In many senses, this historic shift was conceptualized and driven by our Yeshiva University community. The architects and key point people who established the Abraham Accords included our alumnus Former White House Middle East Envoy Jason Greenblatt and our recent honorary degree recipient U.S. Ambassador David Friedman; their work was assisted by our alumnus Former Senior Advisor to the U.S. Ambassador to Israel Rabbi Aryeh Lightstone. The two rabbis on the ground today in the UAE are our graduates and *musmachim* Rabbi Yehuda Sarna and Rabbi Elie Abadie, the chief rabbi and senior rabbi respectively of the Jewish Council of the Emirates.

The full involvement in this historic effort of these exceptional leaders from our community is of course no coincidence. Our core belief in the power of individuals to change the world and move history forward animates all of their incredible achievements over these past years. These individuals, who embody our ethos of being both Deeply Rooted and Forward Focused, saw an opportunity to create a more just and peaceful society for all people in the region. At great personal sacrifice, they have dedicated years of their lives to making it happen. In fact, at the commemoration, a local business leader approached me and described his admiration for the mission of Yeshiva University—to educate students who embody values and character, think outside the box and create innovative solutions to global challenges, all the while being driven in the belief that they have the capacity to impact those around them and change the world.

I was deeply moved and honored to address the group of Jews and Muslims who gathered at the courtyard of Sheikh Ahmed el-Mansoori, a visionary Emirati leader who is working to bring reconciliation between our peoples. My deepest appreciation to Rabbi Yehuda Sarna and our trustee Elliot Gibber for their help arranging my visit on this historic occasion.

As we transition from the darkness of Yom HaShoah to the light of Yom Ha'atzmaut, let me share with you one story from the event. As the program drew to a close, a memorial prayer for victims of the Holocaust was being recited by a rabbi in Arabic, when suddenly a muezzin's call to prayer could be heard from a nearby tower. Both hymns remained distinct but there was a certain touch of harmony and history to them being sung simultaneously. Perhaps a fitting metaphor for the possibilities that rest ahead.

Warmest wishes for a Shabbat Shalom,

Dr. Ari Berman  
President, Yeshiva University

Photos from Holocaust Remembrance Day  
April 7, 2021  
Crossroads of Civilizations Museum  
Dubai, UAE





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