



Dear Friends,

Sometimes I find that it gives me strength—especially during these remarkably trying times—to hear stories that remind us of our purpose and mission in this world. Such a story was announced last week when we learned that Professor Hillel Furstenberg was awarded the Abel Prize, which is the mathematics equivalent of a Nobel Prize.

Professor Furstenberg escaped from Nazi Germany after Kristallnacht to settle in New York where he studied in our high school and in Yeshiva College. He was recognized early as a math prodigy, studying in math college courses when he was in high school, and in our math graduate program when he was in college. At the time of his college graduation, he simultaneously earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in math. He then continued his studies at Princeton, taught at MIT and made Aliyah to continue his illustrious career at Hebrew University and Ben-Gurion University.

I met Professor Furstenberg in Israel at the start of my tenure as president for I sought his advice about our plans of growing Math and Science at YU. He deeply impressed me with his sterling character, genuine humility and deep intelligence. In our conversation, he organically interwove sources and insights from the math and literary fields with citations from biblical, talmudic and rabbinic passages. His profound connection to Israel and the Jewish people were self-evident. I walked away deeply inspired from our encounter.

Yesterday, I spoke with him to congratulate him on this latest achievement. He shared with me some of his feelings about YU, as the educational institution to which he owes much of his life's success. He spoke about studying under Professor Jekuthiel Ginsburg, the chair of the YC Math Department, as well as his time sitting in Rabbi Soloveitchik's shiur.

As YU strengthens our STEM offerings, Professor Furstenberg remains a stellar example of what a Yeshiva University education can provide. His experience at YU not only led to his great future academic

and professional success, but also helped lay the foundation of Jewish values on which he has based his life.

Professor Furstenberg is an embodiment of the unique synthesis that is the hallmark of our community and is a walking Kiddush Hashem. His impact on the world through his enormous contributions to his field and his exemplary character is a reflection of our sacred mission.

Today our collective focus is on the health and safety of our community and society. This is what is needed at this moment of urgency. Our hearts break in thinking of the human consequences of this virus. As we endeavor to care for all those affected by the disease, we draw comfort in the knowledge that our students will be the leaders of tomorrow who embody our values of kindness and giving, seek to sanctify the name of God and better the world around us. They give us joy today and confidence in our future.

As we begin the month of Nissan, the month of miracles, we pray to Hashem that he heals this wounded world and gives us the strength and wisdom to fulfill His mission for us.

Wishing you safety and peace.
Ari Berman

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