



## Yeshiva University

Office of the President

My Dear Friends,

As Tisha be-Av has drawn to a close here in Israel, I am filled with the feelings and lessons of hope I experienced this past week visiting groups of our over two hundred students who are spending their summer in Israel.

Many of our students are volunteering as counselors and teachers in camps for visiting high school students from North America. These students are devoting their vacation time to transmitting our messages of loving the land of Israel, the Torah of Israel and the people of Israel to our next generation.



About 60 of our students are living in our YU Israel campus in Jerusalem working as interns in Israeli startups and pioneering scientific research in labs at Bar Ilan University. One group of our students are volunteering in the day schools of Lod. In partnership with the municipality of Lod and the World Zionist Organization, our students are working directly with the youth of Lod in mixed Arab and Jewish classrooms to help bring peace and

calm after the residents lived through such challenging and at times harrowing experiences in their city just a few weeks ago.



Last week, we met with Yair Revivo, the Mayor of Lod, together with Yaakov Hagoel, the Chairman of the WZO and acting chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel. During the meeting we discussed our students' experiences over the summer and I shared with our distinguished hosts the message of our presence in the city. While the people of Lod were firmly in our hearts and prayers during the recent time of unrest, I explained, we wanted to show that we are also here in action. For this is what Tisha be-Av teaches us. With all of the tragedy that befell Jerusalem in the time of destruction, Jeremiah the prophet opens his Book of Lamentations by speaking about how Jerusalem was abandoned: "Alas how the city sits alone; a city once filled with people has become a widow." But if the tragedy is isolation and lack of unity, the cure is solidarity. Our students are the leaders of tomorrow and we are here, I said to the Mayor and the Chairman, as representatives of the flagship Jewish university to express our unwavering support and solidarity for the residents of Lod and the people of Israel.



Our meeting concluded with singing Hatikva and Ani Maamin. Where else but Israel would one close a meeting with the Mayor of the city in such a fashion?



Last night, this spirit of solidarity was brought home as we commemorated the night of Tisha be-Av on the rooftop of Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh, right across the Kotel. With a clear view of the Temple Mount, we read Eichah. One could feel the words of the scroll come to life sitting in the place that Jeremiah himself would have stood watching Jerusalem burn. The feeling of profound sadness was tempered by the presence of the Israeli flag and the thousands of people pouring into the Kotel plaza that night. While Jeremiah witnessed exile and destruction, we sat in Jerusalem that night and experienced the promise of return. Concluding our service with songs about returning to Jerusalem, our students walked to the Kotel to join their thousands of brothers and sisters in prayers for peace and redemption.



It is this spirit of the Jewish people united in prayer and solidarity that gives us comfort and hope. That even during troubled times for Israel and the Jewish people worldwide, we live in a time of infinite promise. And our greatest source of comfort at this time is ensuring the growth of the next generation of Jewish leaders. Together with their rigorous courses of study, these experiential life lessons fuel our students with the content and inspiration to devote their life passion to the betterment of the Jewish people and our society as a whole. Being with our students during these troubled times was truly inspirational.

As we mourn the historical tragedies of yesterday, they inspire us to believe in the promise of tomorrow.

May God hear all our prayers, and usher in the days of only peace, joy and redemption.

Warmest wishes,

Ari Berman

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