



Yeshiva University

Office of the President

Dear Friends,

This Monday, the country commemorates Martin Luther King Jr. Day on the same day that Jews around the world celebrate the Jewish holiday of Tu B'Shvat. While the calendrical confluence is purely coincidental, there is an overlapping message between the two days which is particularly pertinent for us.

Tu B'Shvat marks the new year for fruit-bearing trees. It's a peculiar time to celebrate trees. Look outside. During the winter, the foliage is desiccated and barren. A more sensible time to celebrate vegetation, ostensibly, would have been at the beginning of the Spring when the flowers are blooming, the fruits are ripening and the richness of lush green fields beckon us outside. But the underlying lesson of the holiday is that true growth happens beneath the surface. The new year for trees is marked at the time when the sap begins to flow underground. Its effect will be noticed only later in the year when buds begin to sprout, but the essential elements of growth flow from inside.

This message resonates deeply with me, for it reflects this moment in Yeshiva University's upward trajectory. With great support from the Almighty, Yeshiva University is on the rise. With new degrees, academic opportunities and career paths, we are rising in our enrollment, our rankings and our philanthropic support. Our public launch last month of our Rise Up campaign to raise \$613 million has been met with overwhelming support. Hundreds of alumni and friends have instinctively reached out to contribute after hearing about the campaign. For example, the Stern College Class of 1972 started an initiative on their own to donate a class gift. In just one month, we have raised an additional \$10 million to bring our overall current total to more than \$260 million in gifts and pledges.

With all of this excitement and momentum, the message of Tu B'Shvat remains transfixed in our minds. Namely, that our ultimate success will not be measured by external numbers but by the internal character and values embodied by our students. They are the leaders of tomorrow. Our belief and confidence in them are why we are here. And that is why I take such pride in stories of our students who succeed through their values.

Stories like the way our Ferkauf, Wurzweiler and undergraduate students joined together to [deliver food and support to those impacted by the recent fire in the Bronx](#), as well as the way in which our students are so committed to their Torah learning that they spend their [winter break between semesters studying in Yeshiva](#).

Earlier today, I highlighted another example of how our students succeed with our values by writing an article in [The Wall Street Journal](#) about the success of our basketball team.



To read the *Wall Street Journal* article, click on the image or use [this link](#).

Tu B'Shvat is an important reminder that true success starts from within. This is the measure adopted by Dr. King in his famous speech when he dreamed of a time in which his children and all of our children will be appreciated by the “content of their character.” It’s the dream we continue to work to actualize today.

My warmest wishes for a Shabbat Shalom,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ari Berman'.

Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman

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