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So much has happened at YU over the past two years since I started as president.

We have crafted an educational vision that grows science, tech, innovation and entrepreneurship; put in place a multiyear financial framework for sustainable growth with an increase in enrollment and philanthropy; and prioritized recruiting and promoting top-caliber faculty and administrators to spearhead Yeshiva University's transformation for the next generation. There is much more to do, and we are excited about our direction forward.

But all of this does not directly speak to our fundamental purpose. Why are we here? What is the purpose of a Jewish university?



A story is told of an older woman, a Holocaust survivor, who wanted to make a donation to her local Jewish organization. She was homebound, so she called the rabbi and asked him if he would come to her apartment to pick up a check. The rabbi agreed.

After arriving and exchanging some brief pleasantries, the rabbi left with his envelope. When he finally returned to his car and opened the envelope, he was confused. He expected a typical denomination for a Jewish donation—18 shekels, 36 shekels, maybe 180 shekels.

Instead, the number on the check was 28,742. Much more than he expected but also such a seemingly random number.

The rabbi was curious, so he returned to the woman's apartment to inquire about her donation. After thanking her again for her generous gift, he said, "Allow me to ask, why that specific number?"

She rolled up her sleeve.

28,742.

She said that this number had always symbolized the most pain in her life, "but I want it to mean something else. It has to mean something more."

The lesson of this extraordinary woman is to transmute pain into something positive, not to be defined by suffering but by what one contributes and gives back. While continuity and survival is essential, her lesson teaches us that to live with values and meaning is our purpose.

The purpose of a Jewish university is to educate our students to internalize our values and become successful role models and leaders in an ever-evolving world. Our students are deeply rooted and forward focused, morally mature and market ready. The world around us is shifting at an unprecedented pace, and we are capitalizing on the opportunities of today. We are upgrading and updating our offerings, adding new stellar luminaries and advanced degrees, creating new partnerships in Israel and leveraging our great alumni community to elevate even more our high-value proposition and our world-class educational experience.

But what distinguishes us is not just the value of Yeshiva University, it is the values of Yeshiva University.

What sets us apart is that we integrate our values into our educational experience. Our campus is built upon Jewish values that nourish the soul and galvanize communities. Our values fill our students' lives with meaning. Our students bring their values into the world.

At Yeshiva University, we are educating our next generation's leaders to enlighten rather than inflame. Our students see their Jewish values as a source of strength and pride. They not only embody our Jewish values, they share them with love to others.

And in this world, which can often feel like a winter's night, the world of tomorrow needs their light for warmth and illumination.

Chanukah is a propitious time for us to remember that our students are our candles, and their illumination gives us great hope and confidence in our future.

Happy Chanukah and Shabbat Shalom!

Warmly,

Dr. Ari Berman



**Yeshiva University**

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