



Yeshiva University®

Towards שלמות: A Roadmap to Next

State of the University Address
President Richard M. Joel
September 12, 2012

Heights Lounge, Mendel Gottesman Library
Wilf Campus
Yeshiva University

B'rshus Dr. Lamm, Roshei Yeshiva, and *kol ha'kahal ha'kadosh ha'zeh*, all of the wonderful deans, faculty, professional and university staff, trustees, alumni and supporters, and dear students assembled here this evening.

Yesterday, I accepted the Board of Trustees' offer to extend my term as president through June, 2018. It is therefore right that we look forward together, plan together, and dream together. So many of you are responsible for getting us all to this point, and so many of you have guided me in always looking to tomorrow. You know you have my appreciation and my deep thanks.

Let us discuss the State of Yeshiva University.

It is here – in this complex and special space – that we can see our future. It is in this very spot, with a heavy dose of architectural symbolism, that the Beis Midrash in which we toil in our sacred texts, the Library in which we explore our worldly wisdom, and the Lounge in which our community congregates as one, all converge in a focal intersection. If I listen carefully, I hear the murmurings of a consecrated conversation taking place; a conversation between Torah and the World, between tradition and modernity, between the sacred contents of this beautiful bastion of wisdom and the wide world around it so desperately yearning for the dissemination of those contents. For we all inhabit a sacred space.

Yeshiva University exists as a Torah-informed institution partaking in a Divine dialogue, where Torah and Jewish values speak to what it is that we do here, in our lecture rooms and *batei midrash*, in our offices, within departments, and beyond. You know *why* that is. For over a hundred years, and in hundreds more ways we have together articulated our mission and purpose. On a shelf in my office, there's a YU *pushka*, a charity box from the 1960's adorned with every slogan imaginable: Torah u'Maddah. Training future leadership, Torah and chochma and gedula in one place, service to the community. Since then, you and I have added to the list.

For the first nine years of my presidency, dating back to my investiture in 2003, I have described the educational process here at Yeshiva as one which “ennobles” and “enables”; we have characterized the mission of Yeshiva as “*Torah u'maddah lechatchilah* within a big tent”. And we have made it so. These categorizations remain true, and have been actualized in tangible ways on our campuses and beyond, as I hope to share with you.

But I want to offer some new language to describe and to clarify our mission at Yeshiva, as a more singular statement, strong in its simplicity. Yeshiva University exists as the world's Torah-informed University. The Jewish people, forever smitten by the romance of our relationship to God and His Torah, endure as a covenantal people that share the values of that Torah with the world even as we live by them. In keeping with this historical and religious mandate, Yeshiva embraces the challenge of bringing Torah into conversation with the world. To be sure, Torah u'Maddah remains the philosophical construct at the very bedrock of this institution. But when we speak of Torah u'Maddah,

we must emphasize Torah as the *ikkar*, as the center and Torah informs what we do and how we encounter the world.

Moreover, when we speak about who we are and what drives us, I believe that we must put forward an agenda of *Shleimut*, of wholeness. Wholeness is the sought-after product of our Torah-informed conversation, and manifests itself in many ways at Yeshiva: It means living a life that values integrity. It means the assumption of responsibility. It means conducting oneself with dignity. It means striving for success. It means, frankly, that our lives *mean* something. All of these notions coalesce into the sort of *Shleimut*, the sort of meaningful wholeness, which permeates the very air we breathe here at Yeshiva.

Yeshiva, then, serves as a factory in the fashioning of *Shleimut*. And there's no one way to accomplish *Shleimut* at Yeshiva. There are many paths that may take the form of different majors or different Jewish learning programs or different service-learning opportunities or a whole host of other things. Yeshiva is not a river which compels its students to submit to its unidirectional current; it instead encourages its students to sail the sacred seas of Torah towards their own distinctive destination on the shores of *Shleimut*.

Shleimut also means that in the service of God we strive for wholeness as individuals first, and subsequently seek that wholeness as a Yeshiva, as a university, as a community, as a people, and as a civilization. Therefore our agenda is to say that we are committed to helping students achieve personal wholeness, and then using that to give the gift of wholeness to our respective societies, communities and disciplines.

The state of Yeshiva University is sound, it is strong, and it is poised for tomorrow. We've been building with vigor and with purpose.

We've built in a physical sense: the last nine years have seen the construction of numerous buildings on our various campuses, among them: The Glueck Center, Student Counseling Center, Nagel Commons and the Heights Lounge, and 185th Street Pedestrian Plaza on the Wilf Campus; the Lea and Leon Eisenberg Beit Midrash, a new 35th Street dormitory and a renovated Stanton Hall on the Israel Henry Beren Campus, the Greenberg Center for Student Life at the Cardozo School of Law, the Price Center for Genetic and Transformational Medicine and Block Research Pavilion on the Resnick Campus, and a whole host of additional physical improvements, laboratories, dormitories, and so much more. Apartment buildings filled with Yeshiva students and families have transformed our Wilf Campus into a Wilf Village. All of these improvements have amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars in capital investment.

Moreover, we've built our *shleimut* agenda, we've carefully constructed our organizational ethos - our institutional brand - as one which puts Torah in conversation with the world in distinct and magnificent ways. Our high schools are renewed, growing,

and thriving. We have a transformed academic leadership throughout the University. And, over the last nine years, the size of our Manhattan Campus full-time faculty has increased from 272 to 367, for a total increase of 95.

Our graduate schools serve as noteworthy barometers: the Azrieli School of Jewish Education and Administration has undergone tremendous growth, boasting 12 faculty members, 189 masters and 64 doctoral students in the Spring of 2012, and offering wonderful professional training; the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies currently has twenty-three doctoral students—the largest number in its history—an extraordinary faculty, and a breadth of programs, in the classroom and beyond.

The Albert Einstein College of Medicine is moving forward dramatically with its research agenda, while remaining true to its creed of “science at the heart of medicine”; it has launched the Yeshiva University program on Jewish Genetic Health, and a new synagogue whose students publish volumes on medicine and halacha. The Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law has been not only physically rebuilt, but has attained great quality and is committed to bringing integrity to law through everything from the Innocence Project and Human Rights and Genocide Clinic to the Beth Tzedek Legal Services Coalition.

Wurzweiler School of Social Work continues to lead the field of Jewish communal social work, and has recently launched programs in partnership with the Peace Corps and in service to our nation’s veterans, while strengthening both its training in service of the community and Jewish communal service as well; Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology is a premier program that trains world class psychologists and has done landmark work in training and placing psychologists in day schools and yeshivot.

Clearly, at Yeshiva, we don’t just prepare graduate students for their professional careers – we train a generation of leaders infused with the value of values and the importance of leading lives of *Shleimut*, of consequence and integrity.

Yeshiva University Israel trains rabbis and scholars, guides students in their gap year experiences, and works with alumni in Israel, while the YU Museum in New York City has grown into a serious university museum, bridging the worlds of Jewish culture and academics.

Our Presidential Fellowship in University and Community Leadership trains a cadre of outstanding graduates in community leadership and university service, while the Center for the Jewish Future sends hundreds of students across North America and around the world each year to engage in service-learning missions and *chessed* programs. Students build lives in athletics, dramatics, journalism, advocacy and service. The sheer number of programs and initiatives we conduct all over the globe in the fostering of the conversation between Torah and the world is almost overwhelming, and so very encouraging.

And yet we continue to ask ourselves, how can we improve? How can we do next? What horizons beckon? Let me share five of the points that must illumine our sky and contribute, each in their own way, to our *Shleimut*, wholeness agenda:

- I. Education-Next for our Yeshiva and for our University
- II. Continued development and support of our faculty and staff
- III. The maintaining of a viable business model and resource support for our institution
- IV. Continuing to build our thriving University culture
- V. Instilling in our students and community the mandate to matter

I. EDUCATION-NEXT FOR OUR YESHIVA AND FOR OUR UNIVERSITY

Our conversation tonight must begin at the center of this institution: our students. The *Shleimut*, or wholeness that we speak of must take root in you. *Shleimut* at Yeshiva University does not just mean a dual curriculum – it means a rigorous life experience that educates, motivates and fulfills. Over the past nine years we have labored to build a first rate product here at Yeshiva, and the public perception has finally caught up with that product. It serves as the ultimate testament to our noble undertaking that the numbers have begun to reflect its merit.

With great pride, I announce that not only has our total undergraduate population increased by 60, but this year's First Time on Campus class is up by 78 students, which represents the largest entering Yeshiva and Stern College classes. This translates to a 13% First Time on Campus increase and a 4% overall undergraduate student body increase.

The Sy Syms School of Business has demonstrated significant growth in numbers and quality as it undergoes its own radical recreation and an awakening of its entrepreneurial and ethical spirit.

The quantitative growth in admissions numbers has not come at the expense of quality; this year we also welcomed 129 total honors students, the most honors students ever at the S. Daniel Abraham Honors program at Stern College, the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors program at Yeshiva College, and the new Sy Syms School of Business Honors Program. We've provided students with \$37 million in financial aid annually, and we continue to develop a warm and vibrant community of students and scholars.

Frankly, many more students belong in our *batei medrash*, our study halls, and in our classrooms. We need to ensure that more people can and will benefit from this truly *sui generis* educational product that *only* we can provide.

This year we also received our decennial evaluation from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. In its report, the evaluation team glowingly affirmed that Yeshiva continues to meet all eligibility requirements in its self-designated

categories of excellence. The Commission also provided us with fourteen standards to measure our success, most of which we have met or exceeded, and some of which instruct us how we may improve (the two standards we did not meet are faculty development and student assessment).

Additionally, and though I do not believe in outside rankings, it reinforces our message to know that we have again been ranked a top 50 university by the US News and World Report. Above all, these evaluations corroborate what we all feel about Yeshiva: that our institution is strong, our impact great, and our future bright.

In recent months, we have launched a new core curriculum at Yeshiva College. This stems from our faculty's commitment to fashion a curriculum worthy of our students. It reflects a state-of-the-art liberal arts education and provides a broad interdisciplinary exposure to the key disciplines.

I've established a faculty-driven task force which will look at the diamond of our undergraduate experience, our Jewish studies programs. This task force will ensure a plan for moving forward in ways that maximize all our abilities; and ensure that our environment is one which builds students strengths, but does not break students. They are to present their recommendations before the close of this academic year.

Exciting growth is occurring at Stern College as well. Over the last nine years, under the incredible leadership of Dean Karen Bacon and our extraordinary faculty, we have taken the educational experience of Stern College to the next level. Whether through the Anne Scheiber Fellowships to Einstein or Jewish Foundation for the Education of Women (JFEW) Science Fellowships; through our partnership with the Legacy Heritage Fund in our "Jewish Educators Project", or in the emergent strength of our Master's Program in Advanced Biblical and Talmudic Studies.

This year, the YU Museum hosted an exhibit by Stern artists showcasing our students' tremendous talent to our community and beyond. We've started a joint program with NYU in nursing which, in just over a year, has yielded tremendously positive results. Looking to the future, more senior university administration will make concerted efforts to be more available to students and faculty and increase their presence on the Beren Campus.

We continue to develop an integrated and unified undergraduate faculty across our schools which will benefit all of the students in immeasurable ways, enabling students on both undergraduate campuses to study with many of the same distinguished professors, and to build departments and divisions with strength. Institutional wholeness can only be achieved through this continued collaboration and partnership.

Over the last nine years, we've established, among others, the Center for Israel Studies, the Zehava and Moshael Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, and, at the Cardozo School of Law, the Center for Jewish Law and Contemporary Civilization, each with the goal of expanding intellectual offerings to our students while impacting the

community at large and placing Torah in conversation with the world in important ways, as only Yeshiva can.

We have launched and will inaugurate several new graduate programs, among them: A Masters in Accounting, an Executive MBA program, Masters and PhD programs in Applied Mathematics, and a Masters in Quantitative Economics. In the coming months, we will establish a Division for Health Professions which will integrate our existing undergraduate programs while benefiting from the advice and support of the Einstein faculty. Beginning in September of 2013, we hope to launch doctoral programs in speech pathology and audiology, followed hopefully by doctoral programs in physical and occupational therapy in the Fall of 2014. We hope these programs will not only benefit our students but will serve as a choice destination for others, developing into a new educational and revenue source for our university.

We have already established joint programs with other institutions in order to offer a wide array of opportunities to our students. Concurrently, we continue to explore ways in which our university resources may be channeled into interdisciplinary degrees and joint programs, and that's what we as a community must work on, together.

We have channeled significant university resources into exploring opportunities in online education, ensuring that we lead technology, and are not being led by it. We have already established a full online master's degree program at the Azrieli School of Education and Administration, which will launch this spring. We have also engaged a full time professional who will support faculty directly in the development of courses, and through faculty development training programs. We are also committed to developing online course offerings on an undergraduate level.

Going forward, we will explore continuing education across the professional spectrum, including the rabbinate, and new certificate programs. At the same time, we're looking at ways for online education to benefit the day school and yeshiva world. With this, YU will take serious steps in the fields of blended and online education, with each school developing its own strategic direction to reflect their goals and priorities.

II. CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF OUR FACULTY AND STAFF

The faculty and staff of Yeshiva University serve as the true enablers in the process of *Shleimut*. Though the ideological foundations of *Shleimut*, wholeness and integrity, may be outlined and explicated in this address, the true facilitators of our consecrated conversation on a *daily* basis are Yeshiva's unmatched faculty and staff.

It remains a key priority of this administration and this board that as resources become available, we look towards the restoration of retirement contributions and salary program for all faculty and staff.

While this remains an aspiration as yet unfulfilled, we work to invest in our professional community in multiple ways. This past summer, we awarded tenure to ten members of the faculty, and last night the Board of Trustees awarded another two. Even as fiscal constraints have forced us to trim faculty and staff, our commitment to investing in our faculty and our commitment to tenure remains steadfast.

A newly formed Leadership Development Program will provide emerging faculty and staff leaders with professional development opportunities, and in February 2013, we will introduce a “Leading for Organizational Success” component of the program, which addresses critical skills, experiences, and leadership abilities needed in an academic and research environment.

“Healthy YU”, our own in-house wellness program for faculty and staff, has been launched and on October 11th we will hold our first Manhattan campuses Health Fair on the Wilf Campus. We are also introducing new voluntary benefits for faculty and staff, among them a Critical Illness and Accident Plan to assist individuals and their families with financial support during difficult periods of illness.

Finally, it remains of paramount importance to continue to grow and support our faculty as they pursue their research and grant opportunities, and share their research efforts with our students. This commitment remains, regardless of economic challenges. The Kressel Research Fellowships are emblematic of that commitment.

Additionally, from 2009 to 2011, at the height of the economic downturn, Yeshiva provided approximately \$3.3 million in university funds to both faculty and student research endeavors on the Manhattan Campuses, a standard which we will continue into the future.

III. THE MAINTAINING OF A VIABLE BUSINESS MODEL FOR OUR INSTITUTION

As with most private universities, the past few years have been extremely economically challenging. Our endowment has diminished, the demand for undergraduate financial aid has increased, and our niche market has questioned the value of private higher education -- even though the case for a YU education has never been more compelling, and the experience never richer. Budgets have been cut, benefits have been reduced, salaries have been stagnant; some programs and initiatives have been postponed or eliminated; all painful, albeit necessary, reductions that have provided us with a balanced Manhattan-campus budget moving forward.

Yes, these times have been trying. But, thank God, we have *you* - a wonderful team of administrative leadership, university faculty and staff, trustees, overseers and philanthropic supporters, who have helped us weather this period. You have ensured that the conversation between Torah and the world continues, and that our students may find the success they seek, no matter the circumstances. For this, I thank you.

Knowing the value of our mission-driven institution, then, we are both resolute and hopeful moving forward. We must be assertive in sharing with our constituency both the value proposition and the business case for a Yeshiva education. We must demonstrate to them that they *cannot* afford to forego a YU education, and that they *can* afford one.

With the increasing number of community rabbis and educators modeling Yeshiva's values, with increased numbers of our alumni returning to their home communities, with more and more community-based y'mei iyun, faculty lectures, and YU shabbatonim, and with a more ambitious recruitment program, we believe the momentum is ours.

The future depends on us. The reality is that expanded philanthropy and increased enrollment will make our dreams possible, and enable the Yeshiva University enterprise to thrive. But our community, all of us, must understand that Yeshiva University doesn't just happen. It needs funds to do its work. And we all share responsibility for that.

With smart and purposeful trimming, we *are* doing more with less. Our balanced budget is essential for the achievement of our fundraising goals, for maintaining confidence from our lending agencies, for being able to meet payroll, and to make our necessary payments.

We must dream beyond the apparent confines of our new budgetary reality. I tell you this: it won't be instantaneous and there is no easy answer, except that if we work together we can do this. We *can*. We *must*. And we *will*.

We remain blessed with an endowment in excess of \$1 billion. We have a high quality investment committee and have established a professional investment office.

We will continue to build our donor base. We have built regional offices in Bergen County, Long Island, Los Angeles, and Toronto, in an effort to establish a grassroots base across North America. We will continue to reach out to our alumni, who uniquely understand the importance of a Yeshiva education: In 2012, 32% of Manhattan campus current use cash gifts came from Alumni. Through aggressive outreach to our alumni we will increase this percentage and the absolute numbers.

And these partners, across the country around the globe, have picked up the mantle and invested in us. In the 2012 fiscal year just concluded, our community invested a formidable \$89.6 million in us, and in the upcoming 2013 fiscal year, we have set an ambitious, yet attainable, goal of raising \$102.8 million. These levels will maintain us; they will not grow us. We simply cannot provide promised additional resources at our current levels. To advance, we all must help identify visionary investors and concerned donors, alumni and parents, who will see Yeshiva as a compelling charitable investment. We all have to work at this.

Furthermore, I have announced the formation of a Presidential Project Team on Revenue Generation. This task force is aggressively investigating alternate revenue sources. These initiatives will be judged on quality, relevance to our core mission, and return on investment. Importantly, these initiatives will not only pay for themselves but contribute back to the University's bottom line. I would encourage you to share your ideas with my office.

IV. CONTINUING TO BUILD OUR THRIVING CULTURE

The entranceways to our buildings invitingly broadcast: "Welcome to Yeshiva University." Meander our campuses, and immediately notice an inviting, and refreshing culture of civility; a culture which condemns cynicism while welcoming skepticism; a culture conducive to the nurturing of *baalei chessed* and *baalei middos*, of kindness and of warmth.

This incomparable and magnificent ambiance, like so much else at Yeshiva University, exists as an outgrowth of our *mission*. No Yeshiva and no university have the measure of support that we provide for our students on all of our campuses. Whether through our *mashgichim* or *madrichim*, our Student Life and Student Support teams, no place provides the sort of holistic experience and support that we do. And if this university is to be Torah-informed, if it is to engage properly and productively in providing a tailor-made experience of *shleimut* for each and every student, then supporting our students remains of primary importance.

We have worked to establish this environment of *Shleimut* in Israel as well. In 2008, we dedicated the Rabbi Israel Miller Beis Midrash at the center of our YU Israel Campus, which is used by hundreds every day. Our July in Jerusalem program gives students an intense introductory program in Jewish studies while in Israel, while undergraduate students from Yeshiva and Stern College participated in a Summer Science Research Internship program as part of a joint initiative with Bar Ilan University. All of these initiatives speak to our inextricable and fundamental connection to the State of Israel.

Over the last nine years, we have built a community that ennobles and enables, and will continue to nurture that community through the promotion of communication and the fostering of collaboration.

Transparency is a tool of integrity. If we are to achieve the wholeness that we seek, we *must* speak to each other and embrace the means of communication, which the 21st century provides. I will not only make this forum, this State of the University Address, an annual occurrence, and continue my Town Hall meetings, but we will find additional means for continuing conversation in the future.

I am proud of how the University at large, through the diligent efforts of the Communications and Public Affairs team, has maintained and grown its global presence and reach through social media. I recognize the importance of staying relevant through

modern technology and embracing its unparalleled potential in opening new channels of communication. Therefore, we will launch two new Twitter feeds from my office. My Vice President and Chief of Staff, Rabbi Josh Joseph, will tweet his responses to inquiries and post ongoing updates under the handle @JoshJoseph00; And I will be sharing my personal thoughts and experiences, albeit less frequently, under @PresJoel. Make sure to follow us both – if you don't have a life.

Continuing in this theme of transparency, we have invested \$17.5 Million in a state-of-the-art BANNER Management System which enables managers to cull up-to-the-minute budgetary data and the university to maintain updated, accurate, and integrated data. In addition, for the first time in our history, we will be publishing our annual financial statements on our website for public consumption.

This collaborative culture has lent itself to the fostering of active and effective constituent groups within the university who have taken on the responsibility of improving our operation. Our faculty *must* be brought into the ongoing discussion of YU's mission because they serve as important ambassadors in the actualization of that mission. We should all be pleased at the work being done by our Faculty Council, and welcome opportunities to partner with them in moving the university forward, and in advancing strategic plans for all facets of the university.

Our students must not only learn within classrooms, but own their college experience, and by extension, own this entire enterprise, now and in the future. We rely on your input and leadership.

Over the past few years, our governance procedures have been upgraded, our boards vitalized, and a true lay-professional partnership exists. These board members have accepted the responsibility of ensuring that Yeshiva is strong and moving in valuable directions. I can't tell you how important it is to me to have invested partners on all of our trustee and overseer boards.

Finally, we prepare our students for wholeness and for success in their professional careers as well. The Career Center held over 100 events this year which drew a total attendance of 2,667 students across both undergraduate campuses. Over the course of the year, YU Career Link posted 2160 positions, a 20% increase from last year. This past year, 97% of law school applicants from Yeshiva were accepted to a law school of their choice, well above the national average of 71%, including some of the nation's top law. Among them, 9 students received full scholarships to our very own Cardozo School of Law. And 91% of medical school applicants from Yeshiva were accepted to schools of their choice, double the national average of 45%. In total, according to the Career Center's post graduate survey, 94.5% of the undergraduate Class of 2011 was employed, attending graduate school, or both by November 2011.

V. INSTILLING IN OUR STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY THE MANDATE TO MATTER

Ladies and gentlemen, the dream is real. We are more than a Yeshiva. We are more than a University. We are Yeshiva University. We have a mandate to matter. As Rav Aharon Kahn declared at our Kavod HaTorah celebration a few weeks ago, Yeshiva boasts the finest *talmidei chachamim*, Torah scholars, in the world. And learning diligently from those Rabbeim are the thousands of students who make this Yeshiva one of the most outstanding Torah academies in the world. For YU to be YU, this must be the case.

Our faculty boasts not only fine scholars, but human beings who seek to ensure that our students understand their place in the world and their possibilities in it. Faculty are here because they *want* to be here. They're inspired by the students, proud of a mission –driven university, and committed to learning in all its finest ways.

As Rav Yitzchak Elchonon Specter, the namesake of our Yeshiva, commented on the words *tamim tehiyeh ImHashem Elokecha*, you shall be whole with Hashem your God, if our people are missing one person, we are incomplete. We have no integrity. We have obligations to the Jewish people and beyond. We must keep expanding our reach. As an institution and as individuals, we will continue to ensure that our students are always aware of their responsibilities to others, their mandate to matter.

Through the creative and collaborative efforts of the Center for the Jewish Future, established just seven years ago, nearly 3500 students have shared the joy of the Jewish holidays with communities across North America through the Schreiber Torah Tours Program, and close to 1000 students on service learning and experiential education missions across the globe. Our YUTorah platform welcomes 75,000 visits a month, and every holiday we distribute 40,000 hard copies of our “To-Go” Series publication. Our annual ChampionsGate conference, hosting over 400 participants from over 90 communities this past August, supports and strengthens communities and their leadership.

Each year through the YU-School Partnership, we reach over 250 day schools, thousands of educators, and hundreds of school leaders, both lay and professional. Nearly 800 educators, many of them our alumni, use our online job search engine to procure their employment, and this year we helped over 70 schools in their search for quality administrators. The YU-School Partnership benchmarking and financial engineering processes help ensure that day schools across the country maintain their quality while remaining an affordable option for Jewish families.

There is much more to describe, and much more yet to be done. Each of you, and all of you, play an important role in achieving Yeshiva's wholeness. We collectively matter.

I invite you to join with me in building these points of purpose:

- I. “Education-Next” for our Yeshiva and for our University

- II. Continued development and support of our faculty and staff
- III. The maintaining of a viable business model and resource support for our institution
- IV. Continuing to build our thriving University culture
- V. Instilling in our students and community the mandate to matter

Let's write our *shleimut* agenda together.

We gather this evening just days before Rosh Hashana. From time immemorial, the piercing resonance of the shofar's blast has stirred the hearts and filled the minds of the Jewish people, propelling us towards repentance and self-reflection. In this month of Elul, as we each consider our personal relationship with God, I believe we must also reflect more broadly on what the shofar reminds us as a community and, more specifically, as an institution. Rav Soloveichik, *z'l* whose 20th *yahrzeit* we commemorate at Yeshiva this year, famously maintained that the ultimate *kiyum mitzvah*, or fulfillment of the commandment to sound the shofar, occurred not merely through passive listening, but by way of a more sophisticated recognition and internalization of the shofar's message.

As I hope I have demonstrated to you tonight, there are so many tremendously positive initiatives and opportunities happening at Yeshiva at this very moment; far too many to limit to one address or presentation. But without the proper context, without a unifying theme, without, as the Rav might call it, a proper communal *kavanah*, direction, they cannot amount to a true and complete fulfillment of *our* divine directive. That is why we are gathered here tonight. If we are to fulfill that divine directive, we must labor to discern within the timbres of the shofar's cry our covenantal awakening. The shofar must awaken us to that more sophisticated recognition of our unified purpose.

And so, my precious partners at Yeshiva, I humbly yet firmly say to you in the spirit of the High Holidays and in the spirit of the shofar: it's time to wake up.

It's time to awaken to our unique calling. Awaken to our awesome responsibility. Awaken to our own identity as crucial constituents of this indispensable incubator of *shleimut*, of wholeness and integrity.

This University cannot fulfill its potential unless all of its disparate components become more enlivened, invigorated, and inspired by a sense of responsibility and purpose, by an organizational ethos as the great facilitator of this consecrated conversation between Torah and the world.

I'd like to invoke one catchphrase that we've used this year; this time, though, I use it in the most precise sense imaginable, as I hope it has been corroborated by our conversation tonight:

Nowhere but here. If you've rolled your eyes at this refrain in the past, I ask you to revisit it once more, not as an empty slogan nor as a simple advertisement, but as a bona fide shofar blast of the highest order: *Nowhere. But. Here.*

With Torah as our essential vowels, and the wide world as our consonants of construction, we speak the language of this consecrated conversation like no one else; our fluency is unmatched. But will we serve as translators to a confused world, as ambassadors of wholeness and integrity, to a fractious and fearful civilization?

Is this partnership with God in the pursuit of shleimut a presumptuous notion? Most assuredly not. Adjacent to the slogan-swathed charity box on my mantel are two pieces of parchment, framed side by side. One of them reads: *va'anochi afar va'efer*, and I am as the dust of the ground, and reminds me of the importance of humility as a constant and sobering companion. Humility, in our tradition, has never been the insistence of worthlessness, but rather the acceptance of responsibility. We are responsible for ourselves, for each other, and for tomorrow. On the other piece of parchment: *Bishveli Nivrah HaOlam*, for me the world was created. God tells us in no uncertain terms: This is our world. To engage. To make better. To make whole.

Nowhere but here. No one but us. No time but now.

Thank you.