

Celebrating 75 Years of Yeshiva University's Impact on the State of Israel

Mrs. Stephanie Strauss

Assistant Vice President for Israel Strategy and Enrollment
Executive Director, Yeshiva University in Israel
Director, S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program



THE VALUES OF YESHIVA UNIVERSITY IN ISRAEL IN ACTION

We are entering one of the most reflective periods of the Jewish calendar, commencing with the holiday of Pesach and concluding with Shavuot. The exodus of *yetziyat Mitzrayim* is aptly referred to as our physical redemption and our emergence as an independent nation. Shavuot, also called *z'man matan Torateinu*, is the culmination of our nation's transcendent journey, our spiritual redemption.

The four cups of wine we drink at the Seder represent the four "*leshonot geula*" — *v'hotzeiti* (and I will take out), *v'hitzalti* (and I will save), *v'ga'alti* (and I will redeem), *v'lakachti* (and I will take as a nation), illustrating the four stages of redemption. Hashem "taking us" as his chosen people sets the stage for the apex of our peoplehood — our receiving of the Torah at Har Sinai, *k'ish echad b'lev echad* — like one person with one (united) heart.

The fifth and final stage of redemption mentioned in Sefer Shmot is *v'heveiti etchem el ha'aretz*, "and I will bring you to the land." Only after settling the land can we actualize our independence and thrive in our modern, burgeoning nation state. Israel at 75 continues to evolve through its own physical and spiritual redemptive process, and the achievements of the modern State of Israel in science, innovation and global responsibility, and of course its contributions to the world of Torah are too numerous to be listed on these pages.

At Yeshiva University, we teach our students to excel in those same areas and more. As the flagship Jewish university, we incorporate our core Torah values into our education, including Torat Zion, the mandate to be a part of bringing redemption and to strengthen the deep bond between Yeshiva University and the State of

Israel.

The expansion of programs and offerings at Yeshiva University in Israel serves as a bidirectional portal of activity and a testament to that bond. Over the last several years, we have brought more students to Israel than ever before, to supplement and enhance their education by engaging with Israeli society and our more than 5,000 alumni olim.

Students can participate in a winter break trip to get a glimpse of the Israeli tech ecosystem, or they can spend a summer fully immersed in one of several experiential educational programs. Our students intern at strategic Israeli companies and non-profits, study at laboratories in Bar Ilan, run day camp for Israeli youth at risk, and participate in archeological digs.

This past fall we launched a semester abroad program to enable upper-

classmen and upper-classwomen to spend an additional YU semester in Israel, living at our Jerusalem campus, and taking a range of high-level academic courses to complement their Torah learning in our batei medrash at YUI.

All of these programs are designed to give students year-round opportunities to spend time in Israel in a uniquely YU environment, including shabbatonim, tiyulim, shiurim with YU Roshei Yeshiva, and networking and mentoring with our alumni.

As we emerged from COVID and the effects of the pandemic remained, we led a group of organizations to host a mental health expo for the Anglo community that was attended by more than 1,500 people. Recognizing the need to offer more, we opened the Jerusalem Therapy Center, a partnership between Wurzweiler School of Social Work and Amudim. The center offers therapy in English to olim, lone soldiers, gap year students and others at subsidized rates, while offering professional training seminars to clinicians and educators.

Our community outreach has intensified with compelling programming for alumni, including leveraging our professional network to assist recent olim in gaining employment. The Rosenbaum Aliyah



“Morim Shlichim” visiting from the World Zionist Organization’s education department participating in a day of professional development at Yeshiva University

Incentive Fund provides additional support for alumni olim by offering loan repayment grants to those who qualify. We continue to work closely with government officials to pave the way for more YU graduates to make Aliyah; bringing the values inculcated in them at Yeshiva, and fully integrating into Israeli society.

In the other direction, we are blessed to have several Israeli faculty teaching at YU schools, including a graduate of unit 8200 who serves as director our master’s program in cybersecurity, and the director of the “YU Innovation Lab,” our university accelerator that gives Israeli startups entry to the U.S. markets. Each year, there are 15-30 bogrei Tzahal and sherut leumi studying at Yeshiva University, where they are

provided with scholarships and elevated to hero status.

We recently brought one hundred of the World Zionist Organization’s “morim shlichim” to the Wilf campus for a day of professional development seminars with senior faculty of the Azrieli Graduate School for Jewish Education and Administration. These Israeli teachers will return to Israel imbued with a deeper understanding of Yeshiva University’s unique role in the Jewish community and better equipped to meet the challenges of educating Jewish children on both sides of the ocean.

Just as YU’s Israel campus serves as the conduit between Yeshiva University and the State of Israel, so too does Yom Ha’Atzmaut, as a manifestation of Am Yisrael B’Eretz Yisrael, serve as the bridge between the physical redemption of Pesach and the spiritual redemption of Torat Yisrael and Shavuot.

Our fervent prayer for the global YU community and for all of Klal Yisrael is that the *l’shana haba’ah B’Yerushalayim* that we sing at the Seder coupled with the gift of Israel’s 75th Independence Day will bring the *geula shleima* in time to celebrate Shavuot in the rebuilt Beit Hamikdash.



YU brought students on the S. Daniel Abraham Program to the OurCrowd conference in Jerusalem to learn more about the startup ecosystem in Israel.