

Skirball Campus Graduation

My name is Joshua Garroway, Interim Dean of HUC's Jack H. Skirball Campus.

Graduates, honorary degree recipients, faculty, friends, honored guests: Welcome to the 2024/5784 graduation ceremony of the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion Skirball campus.

Today is a cause for celebration. That is why we are here. But I would like to begin this morning on a more serious note by acknowledging that this past day in Israel, May 13, has marked Yom Hazikaron, the solemn memorial day on which the fallen soldiers of Israel are commemorated. No doubt many of us are remembering friends or family who have fallen in defense of Israel. Others, though not touched personally by loss, are reflecting soberly on the human price that has been paid in creating and maintaining a Jewish state. Such reflection is all the more heartrending this year, with Israel at war.

But, as the Talmud recognized long ago, sometimes a wedding and a funeral occur on the same day. That's quite simply the messiness of life: sadness and delight don't know to come on separate days. Indeed, as I am sure our alumni honorees can attest after 25 years of service, and as our graduating students may already have learned, one of the great joys and challenges of being a Jewish leader is finding meaning in that messiness of

life, and even more importantly, helping others to do the same. So today, even as we mourn, we celebrate, rejoicing in the achievements of our graduates and honorees, and in our hopeful anticipation of what they will accomplish, be it in the first half of their careers, or the second.

Before we proceed to our rejoicing, I would like to offer special thanks to my colleagues whose planning and hard work have made possible today's proceedings:

- Yvette Joffe, our operations manager.
- Joshua Holo, Vice President of Academic Resources, and Mary Rousson, his executive assistant.
- Ken Rosen, Director of Student Life and Campus Culture.
- Walter Jackson, Director of Maintenance and Security, and his staff whom we rely on day in and day out: Ricky Sims, Alston George, Jairo Cruz, Miguel Rosales, and Maria Rivas.
- Our director of IT, Andrew Durbin, and his team, Eric Ruiz and Edgar Rivera.
- Our coordinator of graduate education programs, Lauren Rosenblum; and,
- Our senior director of recruitment and admissions, Rabbi Adam Allenberg.

We are grateful also for the musical ensemble enriching today's ceremony, featuring:

- Cantor Sara Hass

- Cantor Lizzie Weiss
- Elizabeth Yaron

The captioning and video transmission of this ceremony is made possible by the hard work of Dan Tator from Get Launched, Lauren Schechter and Jacquie Gutierrez from Total Caption, and the members of their teams.

For this beautiful tent, we thank Gabriel Fernandez and his team at Town and Country.

And lastly, I would like to extend a welcome to the many leaders of HUC who are joining us today:

- President Andrew Rehfeld, whom I will be calling forward in a moment, as well as several members from his executive team.
- Rabbi Andrea Weiss, our provost.
- Cary Davidson, a member of the Board of Governors and Chair of HUC's Western Region Board of Advisors, along with several other governors and advisors:
 - Paul Beck
 - Rochelle Ginsburg
 - Bernie Goler
 - Sue Hochberg
 - Rabbi Amy Perlin
 - And Marcie Zelikow

We pause for a moment to recall the memory of beloved members of our community who can no longer join us, most notably Rabbi David Ellenson, the 11th president of HUC, who passed away in December. Zichrono livracha, may his memory be for a blessing.

If you are one of the few gathered here whose name I have not recited in the last five minutes—please do not think that your contribution to what will transpire here today has gone unnoticed. You are the family, and friends, and teachers, and staff, and community leaders who have raised, supported, instructed, and guided these graduates along their path. Thank you for joining us today to celebrate their hard work.

It is now my privilege to call upon our president, Andrew Rehfeld, to deliver a charge to our students and to introduce our keynote speaker.