

(Graduation confirmation of degrees M. Zelikow)

On behalf of the Board of Governors of HUC-JIR, it is my pleasure to congratulate all of our graduates and honorees today. I look out at all of you, your families and loved ones gathered here today and see such pride in all the faces looking back at me. And how proud everyone should be!

You have all chosen a life of service to the Jewish people and your community. And, you've chosen to do so at a time of great upheaval and change in the Jewish world. Now, more than ever, we'll need leaders like you to take us forward into a new future. The Jewish community of tomorrow will not look like the community of the past. American Jews have never had more opportunities yet, at the same time, we seem to be confronting new challenges at every turn. You have chosen to become Jewish professionals and lead our institutions and organizations. Under your leadership, these organizations will thrive and meet these challenges.

I meet people every day who are deeply depressed about the state of the liberal Jewish world. They look at all the problems we face today - decreasing affiliation, stagnant institutions, young people disengaging from Israel, you all know the list. And yet, I remain wildly optimistic about the Jewish future each year when I attend this ceremony.

The faculty, staff, and board of HUC-JIR are so proud of all you've accomplished in your time here. Remember, you'll always be a part of us. Stay in touch. Be connected as alumni. Most important, go forth and lead the people.