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My Dear Friends,

Last week, I had the honor of representing the Jewish people at the AI Ethics for Peace Conference in Hiroshima, Japan, a three day conversation of global faith, political and industry leaders. The conference was held to promote the necessity of ethical guidelines for the future of artificial intelligence. It was quite an experience.

During the conference, I found myself sitting down for lunch with a Japanese Shinto Priest, a Zen Buddhist monk and a leader of the Muslim community from Singapore. Our conversation could not have been more interesting. The developers who devised AI can rightfully boast of many accomplishments, and they can now count among them the unintended effect of bringing together people of diverse backgrounds who are deeply concerned about the future their creators will bring.



Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, President of Yeshiva University (first row, 2nd from left), Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Academy for Life (3rd from left), H.E. Sheikh Mahfoud bin Abdullah Bin Bayyah of the United Arab Emirates (5th from left), Dario Gil, Senior Vice President and Director of IBM Research (6th from left), the Hon. Taro Kono, Japan's Minister for Digital Transformation (7th from left), Brad Smith, President of Microsoft (8th from left), Phallop Thairry, President, the World Federation of Buddhists (9th from left). Photo Credit: IBM

The climax of our three days came when the assembled leaders signed onto the central document, known as the Rome Call, which outlines the core principles necessary for ethical AI: transparency, inclusion, accountability, impartiality, reliability, privacy, and security.



Signing the Rome Call at the AI Ethics for Peace Conference

Standing together with our Jewish delegation, including distinguished rabbinic and scientific thought leaders from YU as well as representatives of the chief rabbinate of Israel, the gathering reflected an opportunity to sanctify Hashem's name in the global sphere. For me, it also reflected the beginning of hope for the future as it stood as an implicit response to an unanswered question asked at the dawn of history. In the Torah, Kayin responds to God's inquiry about the whereabouts of Hevel by asking, "am I my brother's keeper?" While hard, detailed work remains to embed these consistent ethical principles into AI's development, by signing the Rome Call and committing to working together, the leaders who gathered in Hiroshima — collectively representing the majority of the peoples of the world — were answering this biblical question: Yes, we are our brothers' keepers, and that belief is the first step needed to bring about a better tomorrow for all.



Jewish delegation in Japan (from left to right): Dr. Jeremy Wertheimer, Rabbi Dr. Avraham Steinberg, Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, Rabbi Eliezer Simcha Weiss, Rabbi Daniel Feldman, Rabbi David Rosen, Rabbi Oded Weiner, and Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik.

In 1964, our teacher Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik published an essay directing conversations between faiths to be “in the public world of humanitarian and cultural endeavors ... on such topics as war and peace, poverty, freedom ... moral values .. secularism .. technology ... [and] civil rights.” It was a call not for theological debates, which would lead to dilution and misrepresentation, but for productive discussions in areas of universal concern, for which common language and purpose must be found. Today, such a dialogue is necessary — but insufficient. The global implications of AI are so great that this moment requires a common language not only among faiths but between faith and our entire society.

As the flagship Jewish university, housing world class talmedei chachmim and top tier scientists, YU is naturally the address to represent the Jewish people in these kinds of conversations which highlight the unique way in which our deep roots in the mesorah nourish and inform our forward focus in areas such as AI and the sciences. My experience has shown me time and time again that people are very interested in what the Jewish tradition has to say about the compelling issues of the day. With all of the talk of the rise of antisemitism, in which we need to remain vigilant and to which we need to consistently combat,

we often do not talk enough about philo-semitism, and the way we can influence the society around us.

Our students are our future because they are uniquely prepared – through their character and education – to become the leaders of tomorrow and participate in these kinds of global conversations to represent the Jewish people and glorify Hashem’s name in the world.

My best wishes,



Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman
President, Yeshiva University



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