

THE WEXNER FOUNDATION

Dear Alumni,

The Wexner Foundation was created 40 years ago seeking to develop Jewish volunteer and professional leaders in North America and public service leaders in Israel. Our leadership initiatives have been successful far beyond what was imagined by those who shaped these programs. That cadre of luminaries understood the need to support and train a generation of talented individuals to strengthen Jewish life rooted in Torah and the pursuit of best practices in leadership.

Over the years our initiatives have evolved and changed. A guiding philosophy for our leadership programs has been diversity. In North America our cohorts are made up of exceptional leaders representing the broad spectrum of Jewish life. There are few places in the Jewish world where community leaders openly discuss their understanding of sacred texts, communal challenges, and concerns across vast gulfs of difference guided by world class faculty. In Israel our initiatives for public servants bring together Jews and Arabs. You are part of a network of nearly 4000 alumni transforming Jewish life and Israeli society. I am confident I speak for the Foundation's entire dedicated team when saying that you inspire our work. You motivate us, challenge us, and expect excellence from us.

We have taught Adaptive Leadership in all of our initiatives. Indeed, Dr. Ron Heifetz, author of "Leadership Without Easy Answers" who teaches the subject at Harvard, was a core faculty member for the Foundation in its first decade. "Give the work back" is a core and disciplined practice for adaptive leading. It requires us to resist the urge to solve complex, adaptive challenges alone. Instead, it urges us to place the responsibility for finding solutions onto the stakeholders--to empower a community. You are among our thousands of stakeholders, and we invite you to be part of our work in the days ahead.

eJewish Philanthropy recently wrote "...there has been scant public discussion of Wexner's relationship with Epstein within the Jewish world." Together we represent a tiny corner of that world. For a generation our organization has stood for excellence. We are refraining from issuing statements for now so we can listen more closely. While not public, we are engaging in a robust network-wide discussion, and we hope you will choose to be a part of it.

Immediately following Les Wexner's Congressional deposition and the political press conference where members made several uncorroborated statements, we started inviting Alumni groups to Zoom calls to share your reactions, perspectives and recommendations. We are only listening. We will sit in a posture of taking in your feelings and feedback. These calls have already begun, first with alumni of our programs for Jewish professionals and next with Wexner Heritage Alumni (volunteer leaders in North America) and current cohorts. Our Israeli alumni are an essential part of our extended network family. We are in close touch with our Jerusalem leadership team who

has given us initial input into this conversation. We will pursue further opportunities to hear from Israeli alumni once the understandable focus on grave and immediate security threats has passed. And we pray they remain safe and secure.

Our North American Foundation leaders are dedicating our time in the coming weeks to this process and will continue for as long as is required. When our listening calls are completed, we will collect the information and, using outside advisors, consolidate key learnings and communicate back to you. We are sincere in this effort and want to include as many of you as possible in this process.

Wexner Heritage alumni will soon receive an invitation to sign up for a listening call. Please sign up even if you are not sure what you want to say or don't feel like you have much to contribute. Every voice matters.

I close with this important teaching. Yehuda Aryeh Leib of Ger, in the Sfat Emet, dabbles in his own adaptive leadership lesson. He reminds us that the capacity to speak wisely emerges from the ability to listen carefully. We live in a world of immediacy in all things. We are patiently listening to hundreds of leaders. This is the place our Foundation's robust conversation begins.

With appreciation and respect,

Elka and The Wexner Foundation Team

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