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JTS Celebrates Graduates at 130th Commencement Ceremony

Wolf Blitzer, CNN Anchor and Award-Winning Journalist, Delivered the Commencement Address

NEW YORK, NY — The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) held its Commencement ceremony in its atrium on Thursday, May 16. **Wolf Blitzer**, one of the honorary degree recipients, delivered the 2024 Commencement address to graduates from the institution's five schools: List College, the Kekst Graduate School, H. L. Miller Cantorial School, the Rabbinical School, and the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education. Ninety degrees were granted.

Wolf Blitzer, CNN anchor, spoke to the packed room filled with graduates, their friends and family, and distinguished guests. He began his remarks with the familiar words, "As I say every single day, I'm Wolf Blitzer, and you're in the situation room" to rousing laughter and cheers.

He continued, "There's a wonderful situation going on in this room right now. I'm so proud of all of you, and I'm so honored to be here." He then spoke about his family's history and his Jewish upbringing and his concerns about the surge in antisemitism and rise in Holocaust denial across the country. Despite these challenges, he offered a hopeful and optimistic message about the promise that America continues to offer to all.

"As a journalist, Wolf Blitzer provides unbiased reporting of news and events from all over the world. We were so fortunate to welcome him to speak to our community and share both his personal story and his keen observations on what is happening today on college campuses and throughout the nation," said **Chancellor Shuly Rubin Schwartz**, who also conferred the Honorary Degrees. "Our graduates and everyone in attendance, both in person and virtually, were moved by his powerful words."

You can watch Wolf Blitzer's [full address here](#).

Chancellor Schwartz also gave a charge to the graduates. In her address, she spoke about the challenges and triumphs students faced this year and how the graduates inspired her and filled her with hope. "Since October, I have ended countless communications with 'May we know more hopeful times soon.' Where might we find that hope? Where have I found that hope day after day?" she asked and then continued, "I have found it from you, our dear graduates. Despite challenges and disruptions that punctuated and colored your student years, you persevered. You studied the Jewish experience with head, heart, and hand with an eye toward adding meaning, beauty and purpose." **Her full speech can be found [here](#).**

This year's honorary degree recipients also included **Mr. Wolf Blitzler**; **Dr. Gail Twersky Reimer**, founder of the Jewish Women's Archive; **Dr. John Sexton**, president emeritus of New York University; and **Professor Yair Zakovitch**, Emeritus Father Takeji Otsuki Professor of Bible at Hebrew University.

List College graduates in JTS's undergraduate dual-degree programs were awarded bachelor's degrees from List College; they also graduated from Columbia University or Barnard College at separate ceremonies. Master's and doctoral candidates who completed their studies at the Gershon Kekst Graduate School and the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education received degrees as did graduates of the H. L. Miller Cantorial School and College of Jewish Music and the Rabbinical School. A select number of students received degrees from more than one JTS school.

In addition to the conferral of degrees for all five schools, the chorus of the H. L. Miller Cantorial School performed. **Alan Levine**, JTS's chair of the board, also spoke to the community.

Later in the day, JTS held its *Tekes Hasmakhah* Ceremony of Rabbinical and Cantorial Ordination. Highlights of the ceremony included words of Torah from Rabbi Ayelet S. Cohen, Pearl Resnick Dean of the Rabbinical School and Dean of the Division of Religious Leadership; private words of blessing from mentors; and remarks from Rabbinical and Cantors Assembly representatives.

Watch the entire 130th Commencement Exercises [here](#).

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About The Jewish Theological Seminary

JTS is a preeminent institution of Jewish higher education, training thoughtful, innovative leaders—rabbis, cantors, educators, lay leaders, and scholars—who strengthen our communities with a vision of Judaism that is deeply grounded in the Jewish past and thoroughly engaged with contemporary society. JTS also provides high-caliber lifelong learning and professional development to our alumni, adult learners, and Jewish communities throughout North America. Through its Library, JTS preserves and makes accessible to students and scholars throughout the world the greatest collection of Judaica in the Western Hemisphere.