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After announcing LGBTQ club, Yeshiva U president says Pride values ‘antithetical’ to the school

In an email to students, Rabbi Ari Berman rejected the idea that Y.U. had reversed its prohibition on the club.

By [Ben Sales](#) March 27, 2025



Rabbi Ari Berman, president of Yeshiva University, speaks during an event in August 2024. (Michael M. Santiago/Getty Images)

Days after Yeshiva University announced that it would recognize a club supporting LGBTQ students, its president said the values espoused by a typical “Pride” club are “antithetical” to the school.

Rabbi Ari Berman also claimed that the Modern Orthodox [school’s decision to allow an LGBTQ club](#), after years of fighting in court not to recognize one, did not represent a reversal. He apologized for how the school had initially communicated the announcement.

“I deeply apologize to the members of our community — our students and parents, alumni and friends, faculty and Rabbis — for the way the news was rolled out,” he wrote in an email to students Tuesday. “Instead of clarity, it sowed confusion. Even more egregiously, misleading ‘news’ articles said that Yeshiva had reversed its position, which is absolutely untrue.”

For years, in keeping with Orthodoxy’s prohibition against homosexual relations, Y.U. fought in court to avoid giving official recognition to the YU Pride Alliance, a student LGBTQ group. In 2022, the school [announced its own group to support LGBTQ students](#), which Pride Alliance leaders rejected.

Last week’s announcement said all litigation had ended and that the students would run a new Y.U.-approved group called “Hareni.” The student leaders celebrated the decision, and advocates for LGBTQ Orthodox Jews said the announcement was a significant step for queer recognition in Orthodox spaces.

Berman’s letter countered both of those ideas.

He framed the new club as a continuation of the group founded by the administration in 2022, rather than the Pride Alliance. And he rejected the idea that Orthodoxy approves of LGBTQ clubs.

“The Yeshiva has always conveyed that what a Pride club represents is antithetical to the undergraduate program in which the traditional view of marriage and genders being determined at birth are transmitted,” he wrote. “The Yeshiva never could and never would sanction such an undergraduate club and it is due to this that we entered litigation.”

He added that “the Hareni club has now been established to support students who are striving to live authentic, uncompromising halakhic lives, as previously described.” He wrote that the new club will operate “in accordance with halacha,” or Jewish law.

“Last week, the plaintiffs in the lawsuit against YU accepted to run Hareni, instead of what they were originally suing us for, moved to end the case, and the case has been dismissed,” he wrote.

Hareni's leaders aren't portraying the settlement as a retreat. In a press release sent after it was announced, the club called the agreement a "landmark step" that constituted "a significant advance for LGBTQ+ students and their allies." It said Hareni was a new club that could "publicly use 'LGBTQ+' in its communications" and that would independently select its leaders.

"By recognizing Hareni as an official student club, the university affirms the importance of providing a safe and supportive space for LGBTQ+ students," the press release said. "This resolution ensures that all students can fully participate in campus life while respecting the university's values and traditions, demonstrating that Jewish and LGBTQ+ identities can coexist within a welcoming academic environment."

In response to the letter, the group struck the same tone.

"Hareni is excited to begin its work supporting LGBTQ students and allies," it said in a statement Wednesday. "We look forward to sharing club protocols soon and working with the entire community to make the club a success."

Rachael Fried, executive director of Jewish Queer Youth, which has provided support to the Pride Alliance, called Hareni a huge step forward and pushed back on Berman's letter.

"The idea that Pride and halachic observance are inherently in conflict is not only inaccurate, it's harmful," she said in a statement. "Pride, at its core, is about self-worth, collective dignity, and being able to exist without shame. It is absolutely possible for someone to live a proud, meaningful, and halachically observant life."

She added, "When we reduce queer identity to a single incomplete narrative, we do a disservice to the fullness of our Jewish community and the values we claim to uphold."