

2008 10 02 A Tribute to Elie Wiesel at the 92nd Street Y

M1:

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Executive Director of the 92nd Street Y, Mr. Saul Adler. (applause)

Saul Adler:

Mayne libe, , Marion un Elie, es iz a groyser gevirts tsu haltn Elies simkhe do in undzerer heym. Kimat eyn toyznt mentshn hobn zikh do farzamelt far Elies Simkhe un toyzente mit toyzente hobn zikh farzamelt oys dem gantser land iber der velt-brayt geshpins un der televizye oychet tsu zayn mit dir ayf dayn spetsiele nakht.. My dear Marion and Elie, it is a great honor to hold Elie's celebration here in our home. Almost a thousand people have gathered here for Elie's party, and thousands and thousands more have gathered over the entire land via the World Wide Web and our satellite broadcast, [00:01:00] also to be with you on this special night. Good evening, I'm Saul Adler, Executive Director of the 92nd Street Y, and I don't normally start my introductions in Yiddish. However, for the last 20 years, I've had the privilege of greeting Elie in Yiddish. I do this as a reminder: no matter where Elie and Marion's travels take them, no matter what distant and foreign land calls for their help,

when they return here to the 92nd Street Y, they are greeted in Yiddish, and they know they are home. (applause)

Welcome to this evening's special tribute to Elie Wiesel. I want to especially welcome audiences all over the U.S. and beyond, who are with us via satellite broadcast and live on the web. It is impossible to talk of Professor Wiesel's life and achievements without also talking about his wife, his translator and wonderful supporter, Marion. [00:02:00] She is a great translator in every sense, for to be a translator is to be the means that allow more people to encounter an important and inspiring message, and that is exactly what Marion does.

Marion and Elie's partnership is a truly remarkable one. Together they have strengthened peace and humanity around the world. In Israel, they've built Beit Zipporah, a wonderful center to help children of Ethiopian Jews who have made *Aliyah*. In Boston, they have built the Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies at Boston University. Together, they founded and built the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, which seeks to combat indifference, intolerance, and injustice around the world. And everywhere, they have built the most important structure of all: hope. We are honored that you are both here with us tonight --

Marion, I know you're here in the audience -- Marion (applause),  
where are you? [00:03:00] (applause)

This evening is truly special. Every day, we are honored at the  
92nd Street Y to welcome heads of state, medal winners, and  
other great achievers and dignitaries to this very stage.  
Typically, they are introduced by a member of our staff who  
tells our audiences of our guest's life achievements before  
inviting them out onto the stage. But Elie is different. Elie  
Wiesel needs no, and requests no, introduction. He walks on our  
stage and sits at this desk, and begins to speak. This is the  
simple desk of a teacher, and tonight we come together to share  
the lessons he has taught us, not just through the words he has  
spoken, but through the life he has led. It is my great, great  
honor to welcome Nobel laureate, [00:04:00] Professor Elie  
Wiesel. (applause) (pause)

**Karina Zilberman:**

I am Karina Zilberman, Director of Jewish Arts and Culture at  
the 92nd Street Y. I am honored to recite the *Shehecheyanu* for  
you tonight. After I have completed the blessing, we will show  
a very, very special tribute film of [00:05:00] students in  
Israel at Beit Zipporah, a center founded by Elie and Marion.  
These students so wanted to play a part in this evening's

tribute, and it would not be complete without them. They have put together this film especially for Professor and Mrs. Wiesel, with the help of filmmakers in the 92nd Street Y's Israeli sister city, Ramat HaSharon. (applause) *Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu* [00:06:00] *laz'man hazeh. Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh. Ah, ah, ah, ah, Amen. Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam* [00:07:00] *shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh. Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh. Ah, ah, ah, ah, Amen.* (applause) [00:08:00]

**Students:**

*Shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh. Shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh. Shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh. Shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh. Baruch atah Hashem Eloheinu melech haolam shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh. Baruch atah Hashem Eloheinu melech haolam shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu* [00:09:00] *v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh. (applause)*

**Eric Kandel:**

Good evening Elie, ladies and gentleman. I'm Eric Kandel.

Tonight, a series of Elie's and Marion's friends will be joining us to pay tribute to Elie's extraordinary life. Each of us will conclude our remarks with a question submitted by students and community leaders from around the world, which Elie has kindly agreed to answer. So let me begin the formal part of the evening with a few personal words about Elie Wiesel.

Elie, we celebrate you tonight because you've accomplished something extraordinary, and you've done so in three very different areas: in your writing, your public life, and your private friendships. Let me try to put these three accomplishments into a bit of a historical perspective.

[00:10:00] For almost 2,000 years, since the destruction of the second temple in 70 A.D., most Jews have lived outside of Palestine, outside of Israel. They've lived in exile, in the *galus*, dispersed throughout the countries of the world. Through most of that period, Jews have, with rare exceptions, been treated as distinctly different people, a race apart, at odds with the culture in which they're embedded, a people thought to hold radically different cultural values, to have very different set of shared experiences. You, Elie Wiesel, have contributed seminally to helping overcome this racial distinction in your

writing, your leadership, and your friendship, and you've done so by illuminating the universal features of all humanity.

First, in your classic book *Night*, you universalized the Jewish suffering in the Nazi concentration camps during the Holocaust. He described in simple, stark language, understandable to all, the gradual and [00:11:00] powerful psychological transformation of an Orthodox Jewish boy into a mature and hardened man as a result of his experiences at Auschwitz and Buchenwald. This psychological evolution defined not only the modern Jewish experience, but the frightening experience of modern life. This provided us with an insight into the nature of human experience. It has made us appreciate that in moments of great personal crisis, we cannot simply rely on God. We must rely, as Elie did, on ourselves and our resilience. The theme implied in *Night*, that for those in the concentration camp, God was not available as a savior, the possibility that He was, metaphorically speaking, dead, has now been taken up as a major point of discussion in post-Holocaust writing by both Jewish and non-Jewish thinkers alike.

Second, you carried your attempt further at universalizing the Jewish experience by establishing the Holocaust Museum in Washington. [00:12:00] Here again, you helped explicate and

universalize Jewish suffering by teaching the world to echo a common refrain: "Never again," an exhortation to further generations to be vigilant, not only against anti-Semitism, but against all hatreds, against the mindset that allowed the Nazi atrocities to occur.

But you, Elie Wiesel, are not naïve. You realized that the struggle against anti-Semitism, the struggle for human rights, is not a struggle to be won in a decade or two. It requires eternal vigilance, because it stems not from external events, but from man's internal irrational capacity for violence, a capability that appears to be built into the human genome, and can only be overcome by continued teaching of tolerance, and by continued emphasis on the universal nature of human experience.

You were, for example, one of the first to point out that anti-Semitism is not a reaction to the presence of Jews, but to their success. You wrote, [00:13:00] "The anti-Semite does not know me, but he hates me. Actually, he hated me even before I was born." You realized that anti-Semitism is a focus for an innate, irrational hatred, always searching for a target of expression.

In addition, you've further universalized the Jewish experience through your presence on the world stage, by demanding that we be vigilant for the suffering of people all over the world, from Darfur to the West Bank, from Bosnia to Gaza. I would argue that in this way, you, Elie, have done more to break down the divide that separates Jews from non-Jews since Moses Mendelssohn left the Frankfurt ghetto for Berlin in 1749. Much as Moses Mendelssohn used his Berlin platform to begin the Jewish Enlightenment, and to bring Jews into the non-religious intellectual life of Germany, so have you used your world platform to prevent attacks upon the downtrodden people all over the world, and to bring all people into a common enlightened universal community [00:14:00] of humanity.

Simply to remind all of us, it was in recognition of these accomplishments, of Elie's important role as a spiritual leader in an age of violence, repression, and racism, and for his great contributions to peace, atonement, and human dignity, that Elie Wiesel was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. Let me end on a philosophical note. There has been extensive discussions by historians going back over 150 years as to whether social change of the sort that Elie Wiesel has brought about is as a result of events, the results of inevitable demands of political and economic contingencies, and perhaps even of chance, or whether



it is brought about by people, by the vision and charisma of great leaders.

The idea that the history of the world is but a biography of great men was advanced most dramatically by Thomas Carlyle in 1840. But this great man theory was challenged by Tolstoy in War and Peace. Using as an example [00:15:00] Napoleon's disastrous retreat from Moscow, following his unsuccessful attempt to invade Russia, Tolstoy argued that in face of powerful historical forces, individual efforts and decisions, even Napoleonic ones, are meaningless. Influenced by Tolstoy's historical arguments, the great man theory fell out of favor at the beginning of the twentieth century. But those of us who lived through World War II and saw and heard Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, Chaim Weizmann, and Elie Wiesel in action, remain committed to the importance of great leaders.

And we have in Isaiah Berlin a great social thinker, a modern champion of this idea. Berlin writes, "To know, to enjoy the friendship of a great man, must permanently transform one's idea of what human beings can be or can do. To call someone a great man is to claim that he is intentionally taking a large step, [00:16:00] one far beyond the normal capacities of men, in satisfying or materially affecting central human interests." As

is the case with Elie, the leader must, as Berlin writes, "advance a society to an exceptional degree toward some intellectual or aesthetic goal for which it is already, in some sense, groping. The great man seems able, almost alone and singlehandedly, to permanently and radically alter the outlook and values of a significant body of human beings. His active intervention make what seem highly improbable, in fact, happen."

We are here tonight to affirm that Elie has shown all of these characteristics of a great leader, and that he's exercised his characteristics on a world stage, and has done so on behalf of all of us, Jews and non-Jews alike. Elie, in addition to being an inspired writer, a great humanist, and a great leader, you're a true *mensch*. You're a generous and loyal friend [00:17:00] of inestimable value. I've therefore joined your many friends and admirers in raising to you a toast of *l'chaim*, to life, in celebration of your eightieth birthday.

I here paraphrase Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah by saying, *v'hinei ata k'ben shmonim shana*, here you are as if you are 80 years old. I say *k'ben shmonim shana*, "as if you were 80 years old," because physically, intellectually, and spiritually, you are so much younger. And that is a good thing for all of us. In case you didn't know it, Elie, the world still has a few problems, so

we need you and expect many more great things from you. Elie,  
happy birthday, *l'chaim*. (applause)

I finish by asking a question [00:18:00] on behalf of Wing  
Bahaio from Indonesia. Here is the question. Using or  
manipulating religion to achieve political goals is not an  
uncommon practice. How do you see the role of religion within  
the effort of repairing the world?

**Elie Wiesel:**

Eric, my friend, I am not going to answer your introduction.  
(laughter) I'll try to answer the question. The introduction  
was gracious, beautiful. You are a friend. The question is a  
very urgent one. Can religion and politics go together? And I  
believe they shouldn't. They must be separated. It's bad for  
both. (applause) And those who manipulate politics [00:19:00]  
for religious motives are bad. Those who manipulate religion  
for political motives are also bad. They must be separated.  
Both can be good, but not when they are together. They are in  
conflict. Basically, in conflict. Politics is a choice. You  
choose -- tonight, you choose to be here or to listen to the  
debate between two of the vice presidents. (laughter) Religion  
-- once you accept religion, there is no more choice. And I  
don't believe, therefore, they should be together. You may

doubt religion. Part of religion is also a doubt. But when you doubt religion for political reasons, then it's wrong.

(applause) (pause) (applause)

**Barbara Walters:**

[00:20:00] Thank you. Good evening, I'm Barbara Walters. He is our conscience, he is our spoken voice. He is our despair, he is our hope. He is a teacher and a student, always vigilant, constantly putting history into perspective. He is gentle, but tough. His face is a road map of suffering, but his life is joyous, and his words and battles are inspirational and relevant. Those words and that vision must be kept alive for future generations, and some of you here tonight may be parents, or grandparents, of young children, and when you prepared to come here tonight, and your young child asked why you were going out, and why couldn't you stay home, and who were you going to see, how could you explain who Elie Wiesel is, or [00:21:00] why you were honoring him, and why that was more important than staying home with them?

So, this is what you might say. Long ago, before you were born, there were very evil men who spread hatred and hurt and imprisoned people, especially people who were of a different religion. It was many years ago, but some of those people who

were imprisoned are still alive. And one of them is a kind and brilliant teacher named Elie Wiesel. Elie's mother, sister, and father all died in the prison camps. Elie was only 15 years old when this happened. There was a big war, and finally the evil men were destroyed and the terrible camps were closed. Elie was free, but couldn't escape the memories of those terrible years in the prison camp.

So Elie wrote a book about that time called *Night*. [00:22:00] People all over the world read that book. You can read it, too, or we, your parents, can read parts of it to you, because people still do read that book. This is what is most important. Elie was very sad, but took the sadness of life and used the experiences to do good. Fought for all kinds of people who were suffering, especially Jewish people. Worked to make life better for countries like Israel, and worked to help people in other countries, too, like the Soviet Union, and South Africa, and Cambodia, and many more.

When people were doing wrong, Elie stood up and protested. He wasn't always very popular. He protested in any way possible, but was never violent. Elie loved to teach, and taught in major universities. When you get older, you can take the courses. Then, there was a brilliant marriage [00:23:00] to a person

named Marion, who helped to translate the books. This was a very big job, because Elie wrote more than 40 books. Elie kept Marion very busy. (laughter)

Many governments gave Elie medals. America gave Elie the Medal of Freedom. Sweden awarded a great prize, given only to extremely special people. It is called the Nobel Prize for Peace. Today, Elie and Marion have their own foundation that gives awards to people who do good. It is called the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity. So, this is what and why it's important to know about Elie Wiesel. This is the lesson to be learned. You must always try to fight the bad people.

Sometimes, it seems overwhelming, but even one person can make a difference, and make it a better world. And that is why your mummy and daddy [00:24:00] are going out tonight to honor Elie, who has made such a difference, so that you can feel safe, which you are, and have sweet and happy dreams. Oh, by the way, children, did I tell you -- Elie is a boy, not a girl.

(laughter) Now, go to sleep. (laughter)

I love you, Elie. (applause) So now, let me finish by asking a question on behalf of a youngster from China, Zihui Song. The question is, is war ever legitimate?

**Elie Wiesel:**

Barbara, beautiful Barbara, listen. When you speak on your programs, you reach more people in one day [00:25:00] than all of my books together will ever reach in my life. (laughter)

**Barbara Walters:**

No, but we don't have the same effect, let me assure you, thank you, (laughter) thank you for the compliment.

**Elie Wiesel:**

But you do it so well. (laughter) (applause) Is war ever unavoidable? I hope so. Is war ever necessary? Probably, sometimes. Is there a war today that I would favor, and say, "This war is a just war"? And there, I would say no. The only war that I would support -- I would have supported, was the war against Hitler. If I had been in a land -- in a free land, at an age to bear arms, [00:26:00] I would have joined the army and fought. Although all my life, I tried to say that I'm against violence, I don't believe in it, I denounce it, I try to unmask it. But that war was a just war. The others were not.

Some may have been necessary to those people who waged that war, not to me. So today, therefore, when I say we have to fight -- let's say, racism. Is there a war against racism? No, I

wouldn't use that word, because it's too dangerous. I would say, we must oppose racism because racism is stupid, not only it's unfair, it is stupid. Because it says, what? That a person, because of his or her race, is superior to all of us -- is stupid. I would say [00:27:00] I have to fight anti-Semitism because it is the oldest group, collective hatred in history. And it must come to a stop. It's still being waged in so many lands. It's absurd, but it is there.

So I tried not to use the word "war," because the implications are too serious. War against Hitler, yes. How about communism? Oh, I denounced communism, I opposed it, I fought it in my books. I wrote books about it, articles. I went to Russia under communist regime. I know it's evil, but I wouldn't say I had to wage war against it. What about the Cold War? I didn't like that expression either. Cold War means war. No. I would simply use other words. The dictionary is rich enough, [00:28:00] and the human mind is, let's say -- it has enough possibilities to find good words, even for bad situations. But be careful with the word "war." We are not at war. Thank God. (applause) (pause) (applause)

**Arthur Gelb:**



Good evening. I'm Arthur Gelb. Elie, my dear friend, of the many virtues we are celebrating today in honor of your eightieth birthday, it's your courage that stands above all. And I've chosen one aspect of your courage to share with everyone who has come to embrace you this evening, [00:29:00] especially the young. For sadly, these days, our young rarely witness the kind of extraordinary courage in our leaders, the indomitable brand of courage that is so rooted in your character.

Of all the stories I edited during my long tenure at The New York Times, one is uppermost in my memory. It concerns a gripping event that took place at the White House on the morning of April 19th, 1985. That was the morning you were scheduled to accept the Congressional Gold Medal from President Reagan for your writing, teaching, and tireless testimony. But for several days, Elie, [00:30:00] you had been faced with a crushing, crushing dilemma. The presentation of the medal was set for the spacious East Room of the White House.

The event, however, was suddenly in jeopardy. Many Jewish leaders, including you yourself, were heartsick because you had been unable to dissuade the president from participating in wreath-laying ceremonies scheduled for later that week at the German military cemetery at Bitburg. President Reagan had

agreed to attend the Bitburg ceremonies at the personal request of Germany's chancellor, Helmut Kohl, our strong ally. It was the president's belief that he would profoundly embarrass the chancellor if he suddenly decided to [00:31:00] regret the invitation. The cemetery, a fact that President Reagan might not have known when he accepted the invitation, was where 47 of Hitler's elite S.S. guard were buried.

At first, Elie, you considered boycotting the White House event -- the president would not change his mind -- if the president would not change his mind about visiting Bitburg. But after painful deliberation, you decided you would go to the White House, and use the occasion to try once again to persuade the president to cancel his Bitburg visit. You drafted a magnificently moving plea as your medal acceptance speech. And so as not to take the president unawares, [00:32:00] you graciously sent him a copy of your speech. That was on the day before the White House event, to prepare him for your disapproving remarks.

The next morning, when the president and his aides read what you planned to say, they abruptly switched the venue of the event from the grand East Room that could accommodate 300 guests to the small Roosevelt Room, which had space for only a handful.

You had to disinvite practically all the guests you asked to attend, including some from abroad who were flying into Washington for the occasion. My wife Barbara and I were among the very few fortunate enough to attend, along of course, Marion [00:33:00] and your young son Elisha.

The room was choking with tension when President Reagan presented you with the medal. And you, Elie, bravely confronted a grim-faced president when you began to speak with all your heart. "Mr. President," you said, "this medal is not mine alone. It belongs to all those who remember what S.S. killers have done to their victims." You spoke of S.S. barbarism, of the one million children who perished. You spoke of the suffering of victims who were closest to you: your parents, your friends.

"Mr. President, am I dreaming?" you asked. "Is this but a nightmare? The day was meant to be a day of joy for me, my family, my friends. [00:34:00] Why, then, is there such sadness in my heart?" You told the president you were following what you said was our ancient tradition, which commands us to speak truth to power. And you said, "I therefore implore you, Mr. President, tell us, now, that you will not go there. That place is not your place. Your place is with the victims of the S.S."

The audience was in tears. The president was shaken. In the end, sadly, the president did go to Bitburg. But your warning, Elie, was sounded on the front pages of newspapers everywhere in the world, as well as [00:35:00] on radio and television. Once again, dear Elie, you brought your crusade of remembrance to the seat of power, and all good people everywhere will forever salute you for your unflagging courage. (applause)

Now, I'd like to introduce a question via video from a very special guest, one of the students at the Elie Wiesel Foundation's Beit Zipporah. (applause)

**Student:**

*Ani rotza lish'ol et Elie Wiesel aych ani yachol lihiyot soferet kamocha?* [Video Subtitle: I would like to ask Elie Wiesel how I can be an author like you?] [00:36:00] (laughter) (applause)

**Elie Wiesel:**

Let's begin with the answer. The answer is yes. Of course she can. If she tries, if she works hard, she will be. As for Arthur, you bring back memories of course. We were together, I remember, Elisha, our son, Marion, my wife, and I, the day before, and actually, we were lobbied by Jewish leaders not to

speaking up. They said, come on, we have long view of history, we need a president. And I simply said, look, it's a matter of conscience, and therefore, I had to speak up. And it's true, it wasn't easy, because I liked Reagan. I had very good relations with him. And I had to pain him. [00:37:00] But what, Arthur, you don't remember, maybe, that they even tried -- they sent one of their aides to make me shorten my speech. Then, you were there, and you were my advisor. I asked you -- you had something to do with it. I asked you what to do. What should I do, then? And then you said, "No. Don't shorten it. And if there is a problem, simply don't speak, just give a press conference outside. We will have hundreds and hundreds of journalists." I didn't shorten it. Also, what the White House didn't realize -- it's true they tried to limit what they called the damage. But it was live broadcast (laughs) on television. (laughter) So it's true that I failed, that my life is not [00:38:00] filled with victories like that. My life is filled, really, with much more defeats. But the efforts were there. And it's true, when I said I belonged to a tradition that commands me to speak truth to power. This formula became very popular. Now, you have many people writing books called "truth to power" -- (laughter) it's okay. I don't mind it. I have enough words, they can use them, why not? (laughter) But, one more thing, Arthur. I come, as you know, as you have seen, from

very, very poor, little town in Romania, which later became Hungary. And I -- I am a kind of what you call a *galut* Jew, which means I never lived in Israel. Therefore, I am a refugee at heart. Even now, in America -- I lived in America all my adult life. I am a refugee at heart. [00:39:00] I'm afraid. If I drive a car, Marion and I, and I have to make a U-turn, I stop the vehicle, change places, let her make the U-turn. (laughter) She is not afraid of policemen. I am. (laughter) And here I am in the White House, with the most powerful man in the world -- where in hell did I get the courage (laughter) to say -- to oppose the president of the United States? Who with one word, can send thousands of people to war? And later on, I understood -- I was asking myself the question, and later I understood. After the war, I met Jewish leaders who, during the war, had seen Roosevelt. And I asked them, "How come that you didn't speak up with more force? With more vigor? How come?" And they said, "When you are in the Oval Office, [00:40:00] you cannot say 'no' to the president of the United States." So, I think in my subconscious, I wanted to prove to them, "You can." (laughter) (applause)

**Theodore Bikel:**

Elie, my good friend, your voice, to me, is not just the voice of history, the voice of comfort, the voice of wisdom, the voice

of memory, but underneath it all, I always hear a melody. The melody of our people, [00:41:00] which by extension, then becomes the melody of all people. In that spirit, a little poem which I've translated.

Nit azoy der shodn vi der vaytik fun farbay  
Nit azoy der terets vi dos fregn iz kedai  
Nit azoy di Toyre vi dos akhpern derbay  
Nit azoy dos lernen vi dos zingen iz kedai  
dos vign zikh in nigun iz shoyn Toyre say vi say  
der nigun blaybt bay eybikeyt ven du bist do derbay.

It translates as follows. It's not so much the suffering, as the memory of the past. [00:42:00] And it's not so much the answer, it's the question that will last. And it's not so much the Torah, as the struggle for the word. And far better than the learning, is the singing that is heard. The singing, and the *niggun*, are Torah simplified. And the song will touch eternity, when it has you inside. (applause) And in that spirit, too, a song, in both languages.

Ver vet blaybn, Got vet blaybn?  
Blaybn vet a vint,  
Blaybn vet di blindkeyt

funem blindn vos farshvindt.

Blaybn vet a simen funem yam:

a shnirl shoym,

Blaybn vet a volkndl

fartshapet oyf a boym.

What will burn, what will remain? (pause) Just a blind man by  
the roadside, begging on his knees.

Blaybn vet a simen funem yam:

a shnirl shoym,

Blaybn vet a volkndl

fartshapet oyf a boym.

All the myriad stars in heaven, blanketing the sky. Just one  
falling star remains, a teardrop from the eye. When we've drunk  
the final toast to mark the end of day, what will remain? God  
will remain. What more is there to say?

Mer fun ale shtern

azh fun tsofn biz aher,

Blaybn vet der shtern

vos er falt in same trer.



... nokh blaybn in zayn krug.

Ver vet blaybn, Got vet blaybn, iz dir nit genug?

Ly ly la la la ly ly.....

**Irshad Manji:**

[00:46:00] (singing) Ly, ly, la, la, la, ly. (laughter) You got to admit, it's catchy. (laughter) Good evening. *Salaam.*

*Shalom.* And to the atheists in this audience, how the devil are you? (laughter) Professor Wiesel, some 20 years ago, a senator from Texas told a younger senator from Indiana that he's no Jack Kennedy. Such an electrifying moment may very well be unfolding as we gather. (laughter) (applause) And yet, we've chosen to be here instead. (applause) [00:47:00] That, sir, is how much we love you. (applause)

Now ladies and gentlemen, let me explain why I love Elie Wiesel. Why I love him as a faithful Muslim, and why I love him as an advocate of moral courage. Jack's brother, Bobby Kennedy, called moral courage the willingness to speak truth to power within your own community, for the sake of a greater good. And because calling out injustice always incites backlash from your own, Bobby Kennedy deemed moral courage to be more rare and thus, more valuable, than bravery in battle or even great

intelligence. Elie Wiesel exemplifies moral courage by insisting that his tribe [00:48:00] be reconciled to our world.

Here's how I know this. As a young journalist in 1993, I remember feeling pained, personally pained, by global indifference to the suffering of Muslims in Bosnia. I also remember hearing about Elie Wiesel's *chutzpah* in front of President Bill Clinton. You see, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum had just opened, and as the original chair of the project, Elie Wiesel joined President Clinton onstage. Professor Wiesel used this platform to compel the president into action, saying that something, anything, needs to be done about the slaughter in Bosnia.

Elie Wiesel was criticized for capitalizing on this opportunity. But he had moral courage as his personal compass. [00:49:00] He told his critics that the museum itself is not a sacred site, and that, quote, "Jews do not have the right to be silent when men are dying, when innocent people are subjected to rape and torture, when cities are being transformed into cemeteries." Wow. Jews do not have the right to be silent. Professor Wiesel, instructive words for a young Muslim woman who less than a decade later would have a similar message for her tribe.

Professor Wiesel, identity purists may bristle at the thought that you, a Jew, are teaching us Muslims about moral courage. Let them bristle. You're in the finest company of border-busters. [00:50:00] Gandhi, a Hindu, taught Martin Luther King Jr., a Christian, about the virtues of nonviolent resistance. Another teacher of Reverend King was Lillian Smith, a white Southern woman whom fellow liberals smeared as an extremist for her outspoken opposition to segregation. She embraced that smear, arguing that in times of moral crisis, moderation is a cop-out. You must be an extremist of love. Lillian's lesson came in handy, especially when eight liberal clergymen, a rabbi among them, accused Reverend King of creating needless tension, to which Reverend King replied, "I must confess I'm not afraid of the word 'tension.' Constructive, [00:51:00] nonviolent tension is always necessary for growth."

That a white woman helped guide a black man about how to fight for his civil rights reveals our shared humanity. And it captures why I, as a Muslim, believe that you, sir, as a Jew, are such a mentor to my fellow Muslims. Your actions singlehandedly help answer one of the most vexing questions of the early twenty-first century. And it is this: can open societies produce pluralists? People who appreciate multiple

perspectives and truths, without producing relativists, people who will fall for anything because they stand for nothing?

The answer [00:52:00] is yes. A joyous, jubilant yes. Just watch Elie Wiesel. On this birthday, and on many more to come, *inshallah*, may God bless and keep you, sir. Now, allow me -- (applause) -- allow me, Professor Wiesel -- and we don't call you "Professor" for nothing, so this is a tough one, all right? (laughter) Allow me to ask you a question submitted by Nimat Adam Achmadi, a student from Darfur, Sudan. I quote, "Professor Wiesel, despite the magnitude of our tragedy in Darfur, how can we challenge ourselves [00:53:00] to cultivate love, rather than hatred? And moreover, to spread all over the world nothing but respect for human dignity?" Good luck. (laughter) (applause)

**Elie Wiesel:**

Thank you very, very much, for again, bringing back memories. I remember that day. Again, we were in Washington, Marion and I. I think Elisha was with us. And we worked all night on that speech, because there were going to be 36 presidents and prime ministers from all over the world, live television, and I felt every word had to be the right word. We worked on it very, very hard.

[00:54:00] Then, we went to the ceremony, inauguration. It was raining. It was raining. And people were there in the thousands, in rain. On the platform, they forgot somehow, we had our feet in water, which means President Clinton, President Herzog from Israel, and myself, at our feet, had water. And I didn't know what to do. Okay, everybody else -- I shivered with everybody else. Then, when the -- Ted Koppel was the moderator, master of ceremonies -- when he called me, I came to the rostrum, and when I opened my folder, if ever I was close to a heart attack, that was that moment. (laughter)

The speech was soaked. (laughter) Literally. Couldn't read a word. And I had to make a choice, either to try to remember what I wrote -- it would have been a mistake -- or to improvise a new one, which I did. [00:55:00] And then, it's true, in the middle of my address, I turned to the president, whom I had never met before, and I spoke about Bosnia. (pause)

He listened. After the whole ceremony was over, he waited for me. And that's how it began. First of all, really, it began a long friendship. But also, collaboration. He threw himself into that battle for -- for stopping the violence, the bloodshed, in Bosnia. I had to go to Washington many times. Once, we had a joint press conference, which he needed. At the

end -- it was long, but at the end, America did send the army. And we stopped it. Kosovo? Ended. It was also thanks to Ambassador Holbrooke, [00:56:00] who was the architect of Kosovo.

One item more. He was to speak after me. And I didn't know how to warn him (laughs) with his speech. It was also soaked. (laughter) And I didn't dare, you know, to say -- how could I say to him? We did not sit next to each other. And he went to the rostrum. He began reading. It was okay. (laughter) And I said, what kind of rain is this? (laughter) Discrimination. (laughter) Directed against me, but not against him, really. (laughter) Then I found out, he had a good staff, and they put it in the cellophane. (laughter) He could read it.

But anyway, that's how it began. Maybe we can come back later. As for the question, look, Darfur is a blemish [00:57:00] on the conscience and the name and the mission of humanity. Just like Rwanda was. Rwanda remained a blemish, because we had foreseen it. I remember personally, I spoke to the Secretary-General to the United Nations. I spoke to President Mitterrand. They -- everybody knew it was coming, and we could have stopped that massacre, and we didn't.

Then came Darfur, but Darfur has -- what I would say to the young student -- Darfur has become the romantic goal of the young people today, all over the world. I don't remember any other catastrophe that elicited such sympathy among young students as Darfur has. Everywhere, in the thousands, they create centers and they create petitions and they are trying to do something. [00:58:00] It doesn't help. It continues, tragedy continues, because the President al-Bashir of Sudan is not a good man, and the U.N. is, as always, very weak. But at least they try.

As for hatred, hatred is not an option. If you ask me the question, I can tell you. We had -- we, my generation, had that opportunity and maybe even that reason. We could have chosen to hate, and said, "Come on. We were victims of such hatred that it is unprecedented in recorded history." But we don't choose it. Hatred kills not only its victim, but also the author of that hate. Hatred can never be a mode of operation. So therefore, whatever the option, hatred should never be even considered as such.

What can we do? [00:59:00] We could channel all that hatred into anger. Anger is something else. It can be constructive. And furthermore, into -- let's see -- loftier ideals. You

mentioned Gandhi, and nonviolence. Take the Ukraine. Had the Ukrainian opposition used violence, then the previous government would still be in power. Only in those places -- you heard, in Czechoslovakia. Why did Havel win? He and his entire movement. Why did he win? They won because they did not use violence. And surely, not hatred. No. It's not in the interest of anyone. Hatred is ugly. It turns the carrier of hatred into a carrier of ugliness. [01:00:00] Don't choose that. (applause) (pause) (applause)

**John Silber:**

In this celebration, we honor Elie Wiesel not only as a prolific writer and speaker, and author of *Night*, read by many millions, but also and perhaps especially as an active force in the struggle for peace and justice. He is known throughout the world as the voice of victims of injustice and neglect. Whether Jews or Palestinians, South Africans, Rwandans, those from Darfur, Kurds or Bosnian Muslims, Chinese, [01:01:00] Angolans, Cambodian boat people or Malaysians, and the list goes on.

We are all aware of his willingness to speak truth to power, as his insistence that President Reagan should not visit Bitburg indicated. We know that he has served on international commissions, including one to determine the Romanians'



involvement in the Holocaust. When it comes to the plight of victims, he has never been partisan, but has been concerned for all victims, wherever they are, and has lent his best efforts in the alleviation of their suffering. When we hear of injustice, we have come to expect that Elie Wiesel will give voice to the oppressed.

But often, injustice simply goes unnoticed, or unreported, until Elie Wiesel himself [01:02:00] calls us to feel the plight of the victims as our own, and to help them if we can. Far less known than his highly publicized activities, which have been discussed this afternoon and this evening, is Wiesel's sponsorship of an obscure people with no geopolitical importance, whose travails never made the headlines of newspapers or reports on television. I call your attention to his assumption of the cause of a tiny tribe of Indians who had no sponsor at the United Nations, nor any voice by which to touch the conscience of the civilized world.

When Elie Wiesel was alerted to the plight of the Miskito Indians, who, though totally unpolitical, had been badly and brutally driven from their villages in Nicaragua by the Sandinistas, [01:03:00] he flew on his own to Tegucigalpa, capital of Honduras, advanced by small aircraft to a landing

strip in Mocerón, near the Rio Coco. The border between Honduras and Nicaragua. From there, he went by foot through the jungle to the refugee camp in Honduras, where the Miskitos had been relocated in consequence of racial cleansing imposed by the Sandinistas. There, he held lengthy interviews with the Miskitos. The leaders of the tribe, and ordinary members.

He also traveled by dugout canoe three miles up the Rio Coco to an area assigned the Miskitos for farming. There, he also held interviews. After three days of intensive discussion, he flew back to New York, possessing knowledge of [01:04:00] the situation as it really was, changed his clothes, and flew immediately to Paris, where he reported the plight of the Miskitos to President Mitterrand, and persuaded him to cancel the six Puma attack helicopters that France had promised the Sandinistas.

Next, he published articles in American and foreign newspapers on what he had witnessed. On the way back, before he left Tegucigalpa, he ran into another Nobel Prize winner, Esquivel, from Argentina, who told him that the Sandinistas were right. Elie Wiesel was not to be intimidated. He said, "You don't know what you're talking about. You haven't been there. You haven't talked to the people who have been oppressed by the

Sandinistas." When he published his articles, I would like to quote briefly from them.

"Somewhere in the Honduran jungle, [01:05:00] on the banks of the Rio Coco, an ancient and traditionally peaceful and industrious Indian tribe, the Miskito, attempts to rebuild its home and its dreams, which a regime marked by violence tried to change and even to destroy. The Miskito, simple people of modest aspirations, lived lives not of their century. All they wanted was to work their land, bathe in the river, listen to the secret sounds of the forest, speak their language, and celebrate their holidays and marriages according to their own customs." End of quote.

Confronted by resistance on the part of the Indians, the Sandinista soldiers began to burn down their houses and massacre their cattle. Other ordeals followed. Arrests, humiliations, executions. [01:06:00] Wiesel recorded individual stories of imprisonment, beatings, and massacres, and concluded his article by addressing the plight of the children. Again, I quote.

"They are beautiful, the Miskito children. But unsmiling. And strangely, they never hold out their palms. They ask for nothing. They want neither chocolate nor chewing gum. They

look at you, nothing else. 'Everything reminds me of the places of our childhood,' an Indian tells me. 'The sky, the trees, the earth, the river. We even succeeded in recreating our own society here. But still, there are some things we could not carry with us.' After a long pause, he continued, 'Our cemetery.'"

It was not only [01:07:00] his witness to the Holocaust, or his writings, that won Elie Wiesel the Nobel Prize for Peace. It was also that he championed the cause of peace and humanity throughout the world. He has championed this cause not only in conspicuous locations, such as Moscow, but also in obscure parts of Central America, where he alone heard the small voice of the Miskito Indians, and broadcast it to the world.

Wiesel's life and his contributions are unique. He holds no political office. He has no wealth at his command. Yet he can call on heads of state throughout the world, and get their attention, and their support. He enjoys a unique stature and a unique position among private persons, by giving public attention to instances [01:08:00] of conflict and evil. Through endless meetings and conferences, he has successfully reduced conflict in many parts of the world, and thereby encouraged peace. His words and more important, his example, have inspired

all of us to recognize the demands of our humanity, and to strengthen the humanity in each of us.

It is now my duty to ask Elie a question that was submitted by a student, Lina Feliba of Turkey. Has there been a time, an instance, in Elie Wiesel's life when he had been asked to pass a judgement, to come to a decision, on a conflicting situation, where both sides were dear and important to him? [01:09:00]  
(applause)

**Elie Wiesel:**

I feel I should tell you who John Silber is. He was my president at Boston University, and I'm still there. I remain there. This is my intellectual home, my academic home. And he is the one who made Boston University the great university it is today. Simply, almost singlehandedly. (applause) But he didn't speak about my teaching. (laughter)

But he spoke about the Miskito Indians. Well, yes, why not? I remember those trips. Not only that, I remember at one point I had to go in -- as you mentioned, in a kayak. I don't even know how to swim. (laughter) [01:10:00] And if I ever was in danger, really, was those hours -- I was in danger. But I had to do it. Yes. I believed that we are here for a purpose. And if I

cannot do what I'm supposed to do, meaning, at least to raise my voice, then what am I doing in this world?

Again, I am never sure that my voice will carry any weight. Often, it doesn't. But at least I must raise it. And there, I should say, I tried to. As for the question, of course it happened. I'll give you an example. The example is, the Armenians. I have been familiar with the Armenian tragedy [01:11:00] for many, many years. Even in my childhood, I remember, I read -- immediately after the war, in Paris, I read *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* by Franz Werfel, about the Armenian tragedy. When the translation came out in Paris, I wrote a preface for it.

The Armenians lost hundreds and thousands of people in that war. It was war, it's true, but it was a massacre. If there had been the word "genocide" then, they would have used that word. The Turks are against it. Against mentioning that massacre. Armenians who speak about the Armenian massacre in Turkey go to jail. Armenians who write about it, even if foreign newspapers, if they are in Turkey, they go to jail. And both sides came to me. And at one point, I simply suggested, "Look, I am ready to organize a conference of Armenian historians and Turkish

historians, behind closed doors, and I would chair the meeting.”  
But it didn’t work. The Turks, really, are against it.

So therefore, both sides came to me. I understand the Turks in a way. But I tell them, [01:12:00] “Look, I understand you. You don’t want to be on the same level of judgement that Hitler or Stalin were, because they -- I understand that you don’t want it. But look, it’s not you. Whatever happened, happened seven generations ago, or eight generations ago. And you know it happened. Nobody is accusing you personally. There is no collective accusation. I don’t believe in it, anyway. I don’t believe in collective guilt.”

I spoke about it with regard to Germany. I once went to German Parliament, and spoke -- I don’t believe in collective guilt. So therefore, there is no collective guilt. Why don’t you simply sit down and with the Armenians, you say, “Okay, it happened. What can we do now? It happened, and we apologize.” Finished. Don’t even say “we apologize,” but at least, yes, it happened. We didn’t do it, but it happened. [01:13:00] All the Armenians want is their right to remember. And that right, I cannot deny them.

So you see, occasionally, I am asked by both sides, and I try to handle that situation as well as I can without offending anyone, without -- surely not -- without humiliating anyone. I'm against humiliation, individual or collective. I don't believe in it. In my tradition, in the Jewish tradition, humiliation of another person is equivalent to murder. It's bloodshed. And therefore, no, no humiliation. But you must tell the truth as gently as you can, and as forcefully as you can. (applause)

**M3:**

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome a special guest, the son of Marion and Elie Wiesel, Mr. Elisha Wiesel. (pause) [01:14:00]  
(applause)

**Elisha Wiesel:**

I never heard the kayak story, that's a good one. (laughter) My dad would often clamor to go skydiving, or ice climbing, and you would usually say, "I really want to go," and I would say, "Why?" "'Cause if I go, maybe you'll stop." (laughter) So, the kayaking, no, I'd never heard. Well, I guess this is where we find out if I actually inherited that infamous Y-chromosome. Speaking of passing on the Y-chromosome, my three-year-old son Elijah has a little shtick that he does, where he'll see something broken, and he'll say, "It's broken. Who will fix



it?" And then he'll answer his own question, and he'll say,  
"Grandpa!" (laughter)

Now, I know that many of you have spoken or listened to the speeches tonight, of the fixing that my dad has done on the world stage, and in so doing, you've heard of Elijah's theme. This theme, *tikkun olam*, a Hebrew phrase that means "the fixing of a broken world," is, after all, what my dad has been up to [01:15:00] all these years. However, my job is a different one, but no less significant. For the 36 years of my life, despite the important people who beckoned and the world-affecting events that demanded his attention, my family always knew that our concerns landed at the top of my dad's to-do list. So while *tikkun olam* is what you may all know him for, I will tell you about his *tikkun haba'it*, by which I mean, the attention to home life that is the mark of a man for whom family comes first.

Some of my earliest memories of my dad are acting in this capacity. They're the mundane memories, like the time a baby bird fell out of its nest in our backyard in Amagansett, and I was crying uncontrollably, and my dad, like Superman, scaled the tree and put that baby bird back safely in its nest. I think that might be the last tree my dad ever climbed, but I'm not sure. (laughter) Or the time our cat was trapped in a dresser

in Deal, New Jersey, meowing miserably and in distress, and my mom and I wasted no time. We called 911, [01:16:00] because that's what you do. (laughter)

My dad, cool as a cucumber, simply removed the drawer, freeing the cat and leaving no need for the axe-wielding firemen who were pulling up to our door. (laughter) But most of the time, when I was unhappy as a kid, my dad was there with a story. A story about Kabbalistic guardian angels in the guise of lions, or a story of a Mexican praying mantis, or a Russian army drinking song. (laughter) As I got older, my dad's attempts to keep me happy sometimes had global implications that went unnoticed and underappreciated at the time, such as in 1979, when he quietly informed the South African apartheid government that if my Jamaican nanny were to be treated with a hint of discrimination during our trip, there would be an immediate and unpleasant press conference. (laughter)

But it was the moments in between where some of the best parenting was happening. When we were in Israel during the War of Lebanon, he took a detour from journalism and diplomacy [01:17:00] so that at the King David Hotel, his nine-year-old son could spend the day with his hero, Luke Skywalker, or, to my chagrin, at least the actor who played Luke Skywalker.

(laughter) Or after a hard day of being chased by the KGB in the early '80s through the Moscow subway system, he would sit with me, fiddling with the TV antennas, trying to find an English-speaking channel so I could watch my favorite show, The Carol Burnett Show. (laughter)

These are the moment I remember. As I hit those charmingly difficult years known as adolescence, my problems often revolved around the pressure I felt from being the son of a public figure. But even for such a complex problem in which he played a starring role, my dad found creative ways to make things better. In the fall of 1986, I was a somewhat sullen teenager, wondering what the hell a Nobel Prize was good for, anyway.

(laughter) But I recall the smart and creative parenting my dad displayed, in accepting an invitation to throw out the first pitch at the World Series. Agreeing to [01:18:00] throw out that pitch did not satisfy some long-held desire of his to be a Major League Baseball player. Instead, it allowed a son some time to play catch with his father, when he needed his father's attention. And in teaching my father how to actually throw a baseball (laughter), I was able to help prepare him for what, to me, was clearly the most important of all possible public appearances he'd ever made. (laughter)

As I headed into adulthood, my dad was always there for counsel, as my romances created their inevitable broken hearts. He always treated my romantic interests seriously, and he always made the girls or women I dated feel welcome in our home. And most importantly, he always had my back. This was never more clear than in 2002, when I was traveling in Asia on business, feeling a million worlds away from where I needed to be, which was by the side of my then-girlfriend, not-yet-wife, Lynn. Her father, a wonderful man in his own right, [01:19:00] was in the late stages of terminal illness. I called my dad and told him I needed him to be a *shaliach*, a messenger on my behalf. He didn't hesitate, and within hours, he was at the hospital, representing me by the bedside. Both Lynn and I will always remember that.

As we've grown older, the problems that occupy me are often harder for him to really help me with. But as always, my dad does the best he can by praying regularly for Goldman Sachs, or more broadly, for the fate of the Western financial system.

(laughter) I think on this last particular issue, he's got a pretty healthy *minyán* along with him. (laughter) But there's one more lesson from my father, and Elijah has learned it, too. No one succeeds alone. As a grandpa, Elijah says it best. "It's broken, who will fix it? Grandpa!" Of course, if you

then ask him, "Who will Grandpa call if he needs help fixing it?" Without missing a beat, he'll say, [01:20:00] quick and joyfully, "Memah." (laughter)

That's right. For the 40 years that they've been together, as I'm sure you all know, nothing happens without Memah. My mom, who turns ideas into action, more powerfully than anyone I know. My dad is my hero, and every hero has a partner who shares in the heroics. Dear Mom and Dad, we love you so much. In my eyes and in the eyes of my wife Lynn, our kids Elijah and Shira, my sister Jennifer, my cousins Steve, Sarah, and Sydney, and their families -- you two are the all-time, all-star, fix-it team, in New York, and across the planet. My dear friends, please join me today in wishing my father a happy birthday, and to my parents, *l'chaim*. (applause) [01:21:00]

MATTHEW BRONFMAN: That's an impossible act to follow.

(laughter) I'm Matthew Bronfman, I'm Chairman of the Program Committee and Chairman of the Bronfman Center for Jewish Life here at the 92nd Street Y, and it is my honor now, on behalf of the Y, to present you, Elie, with our eightieth birthday gift, a very special handmade book. And it is also my honor to read you the following inscription. To mark your eightieth birthday, this is a book of 80

commitments to humanity and messages of peace. From the children we teach, to our seniors from whom we learn, and from international leaders, to our local audience, these commitments represent the many voices of the 92nd Street Y. They all speak more confidently, more wisely, [01:22:00] and more fairly, because of the example you have set for us. In your honor, and in the spirit of the lessons you have taught us, they all speak to action, to a commitment, and to a world of greater peace and stronger humanity. Happy birthday. (applause) (pause) (applause)

HELAINÉ GEISMAR KATZ: Good evening. I'm Helaine Geismar Katz, Associate Executive Director of the 92nd Street Y. Elie Wiesel was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. In his acceptance speech, [01:23:00] Professor Wiesel delivered a powerful message of peace, atonement, and human dignity to all the world. In the speech, Professor Wiesel said that the Nobel Prize and the message for which it was awarded could never be his alone, and indeed, his words have become our words. They've become the frame through which we can better understand our role and responsibilities in the world. They are words that speak to every person, and every time. (applause) (pause)

ELIE WIESEL (NOBEL PEACE PRIZE ACCEPTANCE VIDEO): Do I have the right to represent the multitudes who have perished, of

whom you have spoken? Do I have the right to accept this great honor on their behalf? [01:24:00] Does anyone? I do not. No one may speak for the dead.

F1: No one may speak for the dead. No one may interpret their mutilated dreams and visions.

F2: No one may interpret their mutilated dreams and visions.

F3: And yet, I sense their presence, I always do, and at this moment, more than ever --

F4: The presence of my parents. That of my little sister.

M4: The presence of my teachers, my friends, my companions.

M5: This honor belongs to all the survivors, and their children, and, through us, to the Jewish people, with whose identity I have always identified.

M6: I remember, it happened yesterday, or eternities ago, a young Jewish boy discovered the kingdom of night.

M7: I remember his view of lament. I remember his anguish. It all happened so fast. The ghetto, the deportation.

F5: It all happened so fast. The ghetto, the deportation, the sealed cattle car.

F6: The fiery altar [01:25:00] upon which the history of our people and the future of mankind were meant to be sacrificed.

F7: I remember he asked his father, "Can this be true? This is the twentieth century, not the Middle Ages."

F8: Who would allow such crimes to be committed, and how the world remains silent, and now, the boy is turning to me. Tell me, he asked, what have you done with my future? What have you done with your life?

M8: And I tell him that I have tried, that I have tried to keep memory alive, that I have tried to fight those who would forget.

M9: Because if we forget, we are guilty. We are accomplices.

M10: And then, I explained to him how naïve we were, that the world did know, and we remained silent.

M11: And that is why I swore never to be silent, whenever, wherever, human beings endure suffering and humiliation.

F9: We must take sides. [01:26:00] Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim.

M12: Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes, we must interfere.

F10: When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant.

F11: Wherever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must at that moment --

F12: That place must at that moment become the center of the universe.



M13: Of course, since I am a Jew profoundly rooted in my people's memory and tradition, my first response is to Jewish fears, Jewish needs, Jewish crises.

F13: For I belong to a traumatized generation, one that experienced the abandonment and solitude of our people.

F14: It would be unnatural for me not to make Jewish priorities my own. Israel, Soviet Jewry, Jews in Arab lands.

M14: But others are important to me. [01:27:00] Apartheid is, in my view, as abhorrent as anti-Semitism.

F15: To me, Andrei Sakharov's isolation is as much a disgrace as Josef Biegun's imprisonment, and Ida Nudel's exile.

M15: As is the denial of Solidarity, and its leader Lech Walesa's right to dissent, and Nelson Mandela's interminable imprisonment.

F16: There is so much injustice and suffering crying out for our attention.

M16: Victims of hunger, of racism and political persecution. In Chile, for instance, or in Ethiopia.

F17: Writers, and poets, prisoners in so many lands governed by the left and by the right.

F18: Human rights are being violated on every continent. More people are oppressed than free. How can one not be sensitive to their plight?

F19: Human suffering anywhere concerns men and women everywhere.

ELIE WIESEL (ACCEPTANCE VIDEO): -- concerns men and women everywhere. And in spite of what [01:28:00] some extreme critics have said about me, that principle applies in my life, also to the Palestinians, to whose plight I am sensitive, but whose methods I deplore when they lead to violence. Violence is not the answer. Terrorism is the most dangerous of answers. I know they are frustrated, and that is understandable, and something must be done about it.

M17: The refugees and their misery, the children and their fear, the uprooted and their hopelessness. Something must be done about this situation.

F20: Both the Jewish people and the Palestinian people have lost too many sons and daughters, and have shed too much blood.

F21: This must stop, and all attempts to stop it must be encouraged.

F22: Israel will cooperate. [01:29:00] I'm sure of that. I trust Israel, for I have faith in the Jewish people.

M18: Let Israel be given a chance. Let hatred and danger be removed from their horizons, and there will be peace in and around the Holy Land.

M19: Please understand my deep and total commitment to Israel. If you could remember what I remember, you would understand.

M20: Israel is the only nation in the world whose existence is threatened.

F23: Should Israel lose but one more, it would mean her end, and ours as well.

M21: But I have faith, faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and even in His creation.

M22: Without it, no action would be possible. And action is the only remedy to indifference. The most insidious danger of all.

F24: Isn't that the meaning of Alfred Nobel's legacy? Wasn't his fear of a war a shield against war?

M23: There is so much to be done. There is so much that can be done.

F25: [01:30:00] One person -- a Raoul Wallenberg, an Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King Jr.

F26: One person of integrity can make a difference, a difference of life and death.

F27: As long as one dissident is in prison, our freedom will not be true.

M24: As long as one child is hungry, our life will be filled with anguish and shame.

F28: -- our life will be filled with anguish and shame.

F29: What all these victims need, above all, is to know that they are not alone, that we are not forgetting them.

F30: That when their voices are stifled, we shall lend them  
ours.

M25: That while their freedom depends on ours, the quality of  
our freedom depends on theirs.

F31: This is what I say to the young Jewish boy wondering what I  
have done with his years.

F32: It is in his name that I speak to you, and that I express  
to you my deepest gratitude as one who has emerged from the  
kingdom of night.

F33: We know that every moment is [01:31:00] a moment of grace,  
every hour an offering, and not to share them --

ELIE WIESEL (ACCEPTANCE VIDEO): -- and not to share them,  
would mean to be betray them, and mean not to be worthy of  
them. Our lives no longer belong to us. No longer belong  
to us alone. They belong to all those who need us  
desperately. (applause)

M26: Elie, we are so honored that you have chosen to allow us to  
celebrate your eightieth birthday here at the 92nd Street  
Y. And it's appropriate that we end our evening with a  
song [01:32:00] with many meanings, but it is in its very  
essence, a tribute to hope. May I introduce to you, Elie,  
the Young People's Chorus of New York City in residence  
here, at the 92nd Street Y. (applause) (pause)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHORUS OF NEW YORK CITY:

HaTikvah

Kol 'od balevav penimah

Nefesh Yehudi homiyah,

Ulfa'ate mizrach kadimah,

'Ayin leTziyon tzofiyah;

'Od lo avdah tikvatenu,

Hatikvah bat shnot 'alpayim,

Lihyot 'am chofshi be'artzenu,

'Eretz-Tziyon virushalayim.

[01:32:54 - 01:34:06]. (applause)

[1:34:06 - end] (no dialogue)

END OF VIDEO FILE