

Y

Malcom Hoenlein:

(audience applause) Welcome Elie Wiesel, and Mrs. Wiesel, right here. Are we ready? Ladies and gentlemen, I hope you agree that it was worth waiting, and for those who don't know, they've been for a long time, many came here at four, three this morning, five o'clock. We didn't feed them, we gave them nothing, and they still came, which is unusual for a Jewish audience. (laughter) Let me introduce to you the Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Alan Solow. (audience applause)

Alan Solow:

Thank you. Thank you very much, and Malcolm, thanks for getting this kicked off tonight. Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, we're running a little bit late, so we're going to try to move [00:01:00] this program along as quickly as we can. So it is now my distinct honor and great privilege to introduce to you the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu and his lovely wife, Sara Netanyahu.

Alan Solow:

[00:02:00] (audience whistles and applause) There will be lots of other opportunities. As all of us know, we're in for a very thrilling opportunity to hear the Prime Minister speak to us tonight. I want to begin with just a few remarks [00:03:00] and thank yous and introductions, and as I said, we'll try to move the program along just as quickly as we can. I want to thank the 92nd Street Y for providing us this facility and doing such a terrific job of hosting us this evening. (audience applause) And I want to thank the members of the Conference of Presidents, together with the Israeli Consulate here in New York for organizing the activities this evening and making sure that all of us get an opportunity to meet with the Prime Minister and Mrs. Netanyahu.

And I also want to take a moment just to recognize some of the senior officials from the Israeli government who are here with us tonight. Ambassador Michael Oren, the Ambassador of the United States for Israel is with us tonight. (audience applause) Ambassador Gabriela Shalev, Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations. (audience applause) [00:04:00] And also, Ambassador Asi Shariv, who is the ambassador here in New York, serving as the consul general. (audience applause) We are truly blessed to have such an outstanding team that's been appointed by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Ministry. They serve us

well. At this time, I'd like to introduce Mr. Thomas Kaplan, the president of the 92nd Street Y. (audience applause)

Thomas Kaplan:

Mr. Prime Minister, Mrs. Netanyahu, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Thomas Kaplan. As president of the board of the board of directors, it is my distinct honor to welcome you to the 92nd Street Y, as well as those of you in the hall and those all over the world who are participating in this event via our [00:05:00] webcast. I would like to thank our partners, the Consulate General of Israel in New York, and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, for their partnership in creating this very special event. For 135 years, the 92nd Street Y has been proud to be a center for communities. We began our existence as a center for a community of Jewish people new to America.

Building on this foundation, we have become a center for countless communities, from students to seniors, from dancers to diplomats, from poets to parents. But whether it is the great thinkers and leaders on our stage, the people who exercise in our health center, or the younger generations we are reaching out to through 92Y Tribeca. There is one fundamental belief that lives [00:06:00] at the center of all of our communities.

Our commitment to promote public pride in our Jewish heritage and to cherish and share our Jewish values and traditions. In today's world of so many challenges that we share, and these challenges were so clear this very week, this commitment could not be more important. It is within this context and with great humility that we welcome the Prime Minister of Israel.

On his shoulders rests the heavy decisions of not only making a just peace, but confronting a fanatical regime that threatens his people, our people. We are inspired by your leadership, sustained by your faith, and truly honored by your presence. Prime Minister, Mrs. Netanyahu, and all of our audience, on behalf of the 92nd Street Y, a very warm welcome. Thank you.
[00:07:00] (audience applause)

Alan Solow:

Thank you, Tom. With leadership like that, you know why the 92nd Street Y has the fabulous reputation that it does. There are some thousand people here tonight to greet you, Mr. Prime Minister and Mrs. Netanyahu. Obviously, there's a lot of excitement in the air. It stems from your representation of the State of Israel and the Jewish people. This has been an interesting and busy week for you, I know, and this is a time of great challenges, but also wonderful opportunities for the

people of the state of Israel. We are indeed fortunate at this time in our history to have somebody in the leadership of the country who combines experience, wisdom, commitment and a strong vision, a tremendous sense of right and wrong as was demonstrated in his magnificent speech at the United Nations this afternoon. [00:08:00] (audience applause)

There is a long road to be traveled ahead, and there will be good times and there will be bad times. But having a steady leader at the helm who has judgment and intelligence will serve us well. I know, as an American Jewish leader, that I sleep much better at night knowing that we have this great leader to be in charge at this particular critical point in time for the people of Israel. (audience applause) I could go on, but it would be redundant, and the Prime Minister will, as he always does, demonstrate exactly the type of leader he is when he has the opportunity to speak to us in a few moments. [00:09:00] But indeed, it is a singular pleasure for me to have the opportunity to introduce the person who's going to introduce the Prime Minister. And that is somebody who really needs no introduction, and that is the magnificent Elie Wiesel. (audience applause)

Now, volumes have been written about his greatness and justifiably so, but all I will simply say is that Mr. Wiesel's life is a demonstration of human frailty and human triumph. He is a person who has forever stood against evil and has taught us to be vigilant and taught us the cost of being silent. In that respect, it's especially appropriate that he introduce the Prime Minister tonight. Ladies and gentlemen, Elie Wiesel. (audience applause) [00:10:00]

Elie Wiesel:

Mr. Prime Minister, Sara, ambassadors, consuls, good friends. Prime Minister, I remember our first meeting. Marion and I were there in our home when a great historian of Jewish medieval history and literature, [00:11:00] Benzion Netanyahu and his young son, were sitting there. We read together letters that brought tears to our eyes. Letters written by Yoni, the legendary Yoni, that happened a few weeks after Entebbe. And that's when I met you, my dear Prime Minister. Was it the pathos with personal references that we read together that moved me so deeply? Whatever the reason, that encounter left a special place in my heart for you.

[00:12:00] Then we met elsewhere, in Boston, where you were a student and I was teaching. And we would sit and talk and talk,

and I loved listening to you. We are in the middle of the Aseret Yemei Teshuvah, the 10 Days of the Awe. In our prayers, we plead with the Almighty, among others, to watch upon our people and all people. And of course, we plead for Israel's welfare. The time has come for Israel to live with less sadness, with less anguish, with some measure of joy, true joy, thanks to its security. We speak to God that day. But you, Mr. Prime Minister, must also address human beings, [00:13:00] including your equals. And some of them are unworthy even of being there in the same hall with you. (audience applause)

The Jewish people's destiny is of strange texture. When it's good, it's very good; when it's not, it's very bad. And yet, we remain the same. We remain the same because our memory, which is the oldest memory of suffering and strength of all people in history. And we remember. And you -- we have seen it, even today. You have so anchored your vision in that [00:14:00] memory that whatever decision you make for the sake of the state of Israel is somehow impacted by that memory. Now, we know we have enemies. There are also friends. But we must remember that; we have learned to trust more the threats of the enemy than the promises of the friend. (audience applause) The challenges are great, they always were. Fortunately, you are known as a master communicator. No one since Abba Eban

[00:15:00] was as forceful, as good, as convincing in defending Israel's name and Israel's honor, whatever its policy may be, as you are. You inspire confidence, curiosity, interest, empathy, and critical admiration. Even those who disagree with you, or at least with one of your decisions here and there, cannot but recognize the stunning gift you have in explaining their validity.

You're here in a place, Mr. Prime Minister, which has been my classroom, (laughs) or my shul, for 43 years. Usually, I come here four times a year to give lectures. Never standing, always sitting. And I was told and -- we may have sold the table [00:16:00] on eBay, maybe, who knows. (laughter) And now, it's yours. I never taught politics, but you never do, because you do more than that. Whatever motivates you is not political gain, not even political victory. But more than that, to make history move forward in a direction which must be ours and our own. So, it is with deep warmth for you that I have the honor of presenting, ladies and gentlemen, a distinguished statesman, diplomat, military man, visionary, Mr. [00:17:00] Binyamin, son of Benzion, Netanyahu.

Benjamin Netanyahu:

(audience whistles and applause) [00:18:00] I remember that meeting, that first meeting, when my father and I came to see you, Elie and Marion. We had letters, we hadn't yet published the letters of my brother. But in one of them, he refers to a book, *The Night*, written by Elie Wiesel. It made, he said, a terrific impression on him. So, I read the book. It made an extraordinary impression on me. But Elie has written many books and one great book. [00:19:00] You are the greatest witness of the Holocaust. You don't let them lie. (audience applause) And you speak truth of mind and truth from the heart, and you defended our people, and you've defended truth and justice, it's the same. And you've done so, Elie, with a passion, a poetry, really.

Poetry always comes from passion. That is unmatched and is much loved by Sara, [00:20:00] who lost her family there -- not all, three got out, one of them is her father -- but maybe a hundred souls perished. You got out. And you never forgot the enormous responsibility places on a man of your gifts and your soul to dedicate your life to maintaining memory, because as we learned, all it takes for memory to be erased and for lies to be propagated is for them to be unopposed. So, I think, Elie, [00:21:00] that we all salute you. I salute you, the Jewish

people salutes you, and humankind salutes you for standing up to the truth. (audience applause)

I want to recognize three ambassadors, that's unusual, the United States is a big country, Israel can't do with one, but to begin with the one in Washington, Michael Oren, (audience applause) who's written widely about the unique relationship between our two countries and now has to actually do something about it. Ambassador Gabriela Shalev, who is in that wonderful that we all visited today, in the UN. (audience applause) And Ambassador Asi Shariv, our consul general. (audience applause) I want to thank Alan Solow for introducing the introducer, (laughter) [00:22:00] and for his good works on behalf of the Jewish people.

And Tom Kaplan -- I will tell you something, Tom. I think -- I'm not sure -- I think, and this may have been before you were born, that over 50 years ago, my parents, my family came to New York City for about a year. And they had to do something with us in this (gestures) concrete world. And so, I think there's a swimming pool here, is that right? Is that right? Well, I think this was my first immersion in American Jewish affairs, (laughter) because this is where I learned to swim. So, thank you for (audience applause) teaching me how to navigate the

sometimes placid and sometimes turbulent waters of [00:23:00]
America.

I became Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations in 1984, and shortly afterwards, I -- I had a visit in my office, which I revisited the other day with a shocking discovery that we don't change the furniture or the anything, in fact. (laughter) Well, we have grown, economically. But this office definitely enjoys constancy, there's no question about that. (laughter) So in this same office, I got a knock on the door, and there is a young gentleman who wants to see you. And he says he knows you. [00:24:00] And in he comes, and this is a strapping Hasid, you know, with the beard, peyes. And I said, "Do I know you?" He says, "You don't know me? Bibi, this is Shamaya." No, see, it doesn't say anything to you. Shamaya was a member of a kibbutz of Mapam, Shomer Hatzair. And he'd been a very fine soldier of mine in the unit that I served in the Army, and I was his commander, and I hadn't seen him for a few years, as you can see.

And he said, "Well, you see, I've become a Lubavitcher. And the Rebbe wants to see you." I said, "The Rebbe wants to see me?" "Okay, let's go see him." I said, "It's not so simple." We have to go to see him, and this was the eve of Simchat Torah.

"So," he said, "we'll go [00:25:00] tonight." I said, "Okay, seven, eight o'clock?" He said, "No, twelve o'clock I'll pick you up." (laughter) Midnight. Alright. He picked me up, we came to that famous address, a replica of a house we have near Ben Gurion Airport -- no, that's (laughter) -- and right next to it is a hall. It was about this size, smaller, I think. And I walk in. How many people are there, a thousand people here? First of all, thank you all for coming, I appreciate that very much, (audience applause) thank you.

Now, see, the difference with you and Chabad is they perform miracles, because they had about four thousand people in a place like this. Now, how did they accomplish this miracle? They accomplished it by having hills and valleys of Hasidim because [00:26:00] they packed -- it's not clear to me what the structure was, but they had (laughter) boxes or things. Anyway, full. And in this human sea, you know, I somehow was taken by Shamaya, brought to a stage, the stage was tiny. It was about the size of my outstretched arms, and there was a small Sefer Torah facing the wall. And Shamaya says, "Wait here." And I said, "Here?" "Wait here."

So, I sit down, on the stage. And suddenly, a door opens, and shuts -- you can't see anyone there, because the Rebbe was not -

- he was a man of enormous stature, but not of great height.
(laughter) And you saw the sea parting like the Red Sea.
Movement, and the Rebbe came up and went to [00:27:00] -- he went to the Sefer Torah, and he started to read with his back to the crowd. And Shamaya says to me at that point, he says, "Now." I said, "Now what?" (laughter) He said, "Go to the Rebbe now." I said, "Shamaya, he's reading the Torah." He says, "Go to the Rebbe now." The soldier giving the commander the orders. Life has its reversals. And I thought, well, you know, this was not Rome, but in Lubavitch-land, do as (laughter) -- so, I came to the Rebbe. And I tried to get his attention, but I'm not successful. So, I tap him on the shoulder. And [00:28:00] he looks like this (turns head) to the side. And I said, in English, I said, "Rebbe, I came to see you." And he said, "Just to see? Not to talk?" (laughter)

And then, we started talking. He talked in Hebrew. He switched to Hebrew, perfect Hebrew, with a certain Ashkenazi accent, (laughter) but perfect Hebrew. And we spoke for about five minutes, 10 minutes, and the Hasidim are getting very restless. Fifteen minutes, 20 minutes, and there's a buzz, a hum, that begins (laughs) to rise. Thirty minutes, 35 [00:29:00] minutes, I think my physical safety is now in jeopardy. And after 40 minutes, he stopped. He had said what he wanted to say. And he

turned to the audience and with his hands, he started to get the Hasidim to sing and dance. And then, something happened I'll never forget until the end of my life. The Rebbe and his brother-in-law -- I think they were both approaching 80 at the time, or maybe in their mid-seventies -- they took the Sefer Torah, the Torah scroll, and they went in the center of the hall, [00:30:00] surrounded by all the Hasidim, and there was a light that shone from the ceiling and bathed them in a pool of light. And I see these two old, bearded Jews dancing in a circle of light with a Torah. And I felt (pauses) the strength of generations. The power of our traditions. Our faith, our people.

And now, I'll tell you what the Rebbe told me. He said many things. But he said one big thing. He said, "You will go into a house of lies." [00:31:00] That's how he called a particular institution. (laughter) He said, "Remember that in a hall of perfect darkness, totally dark, if you light one small candle, its light will be seen from afar. *or y'karot*, its precious light will be seen by everyone." He said, "Your job" -- he didn't say job, *shlichus*-- "your mission is to light a candle for truth and for the Jewish people." [00:32:00] And that's what I've tried to do ever since. Elie, you've been doing it

all your adult life, from your youth, and this is what we're all asked to do. We have to dispel the lies.

There are three great lies that are directed against our people. The first is the most pernicious: that the Holocaust did not occur. It is an example of what Mark Twain said and has since become obvious, that the greater the lie, the more unopposed, the quicker [00:33:00] it spreads. It's a great lie, it's a poisonous lie, and it should be stopped. It should be punctured by the truth. The second is the -- is even more pervasive. And that is that it is Israel who has been the aggressor in the conflict. No, we haven't been. From its inception, Zionism sought to make peace and made unbelievable concessions. In the 1920s, in the 1930s, the 1940s, in the Partition Resolution, in the withdrawal from the Sinai, in the withdrawal from Gaza, and Wye River, elsewhere as well. Israel and before that, the Zionist movement, [00:34:00] sought time and time again, making painful compromises, compromising things that we hold more dear than any other people holds dear anything. But we were willing to make those compromises to make peace. It is not we who attack them; it is they who attacked us.

What this lie has done is to turn the results of Arab aggression against Israel into its cause. And what you say, and again, if

you repeat it over and over again, that this conflict is about the territories and about the settlements, and there are issues to be resolved in negotiations, without a doubt. But they are not the cause. How do we know that? Because this conflict raged from 1920 until 1967, about 50 years before there was a single Israeli soldier in Judea and Samaria. Because when [00:35:00] we left that -- or Gaza, because when we left Gaza, every last inch of it, they fired rockets into occupied Palestine. Because when left Lebanon, to the last square inch, they fired rockets into occupied Haifa. Our presence in Judea and Samaria is a result of Arab aggression, not its cause. And we want peace. And we expect the other side to make peace with the Jewish state of Israel. That has to come. (audience applause)

The third lie (pauses) is the most preposterous. It says that we are foreign [00:36:00] colonialists. The people of Israel are foreign colonialists in the land of Israel. Now, there are many ways to rebut this one. But here's my way of doing it. You see, a lot of dignitaries, important leaders of the world, visit my office in Jerusalem. Israel is a small country, but it draws a lot of attention. (laughter) So, a lot of important people come to the office of the Prime Minister. And they come in, and I say, "Look, we've been around here for some time. But

I want to show you something." And on the wall, there is a photograph of a [00:37:00] signet ring that was found some time ago in the -- right next to the Wall in Jerusalem. And it is in that area. It's 2700 years old. It has a name in Hebrew inscribed; the owner of the ring was evidently an official. You know what that name is? The name, and I can read it, because I read ancient Hebrew, is Netanyahu. Netanyahu ben Yoash. Not Benzion, but ben Yoash. I said, "Well, that's my last name. But my first name goes back further. It's Benjamin. And Benjamin goes back to [00:38:00] what, 3500 years, and they roamed the same hills? You know, places like Hebron, places like that. We're not conquerors. We're not colonialists. We're not strange interlopers in some far away continent. This is the land of Israel. This is the land of our forefathers. (audience applause) This is our past, and this is our future.

So, we are now, again, as in every year between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, [00:39:00] we all have our personal accounting. God, I hope the adversaries of the Jews do some of their personal accounting, but here's a request I have for you. One I ask myself every day -- of myself. I ask you, when you light the candles on Yom Kippur, I ask you to light one other candle. It's the same candle; it's the candle of truth and justice for the Jewish people and for the Jewish state. Thank you, and

todah rabbah. (audience applause) [00:40:00] Todah rabah, thank you. Todah Rabah, todah, thank you.

Malcom:

Mrs. Netanyahu, would you join us please? Please be seated for one minute. You can't leave anyway, because the doors are locked until the Prime Minister leaves, and you'll be glued to the seats. We also have the national anthems that are going to be sung for us by -- by Cantor Dudu Fisher and Cantor Helfgot, so it's a special treat and a good inspiration as we go towards Yom Kippur. But first, we want to present Mrs. Netanyahu. This is a strange young lady named Mindy Stein -- that is Mindy Stein of Brooklyn, who happens to be related to me through her mother, who is my daughter. (laughter) [00:41:00] (audience applause) What did you have to say?

Mindy Stein:

Shanah Tovah. (audience applause)

Malcom:

You can stay with them. It's your 15 minutes of fame, kid, take it. (laughter) We say in the tefillot that "*T'kah b'shofar gadol lcheruteinu*", to blow a great shofar to our peace. This is the biggest shofar we could find, Mr. Prime Minister. The

shofar is the call to assembly for peace and for war. It motivates us, it awakens us, it mobilizes us, as you said, and it energizes us. It sounds the alarm, the call to action, just as it does the call to penitence and introspection. [00:42:00] Today, you sounded that call at the United Nations. It was a call they needed to hear. Today, you graced that podium that was disgraced yesterday (audience applause) by Ahmadinejad and Gaddafi. (audience applause) They need to do a lot of penitence. They need to hear the call. The truth is that this is a time of great challenges -- you have often said, and of great opportunities. We look back in order to look forward.

It's one of the themes of Rosh Hashanah -- and Yom Kippur -- is not just to look back over the last year for the sake of reviewing all of our tsuris and how the stock market did, and everything else. But more to energize us for the year ahead. To learn from our mistakes, and every day, discoveries are made in Yerushalayim. Every shovel in the ground uncovers our past to remind us of our obligations to the future. [00:43:00] In fact, in the Givati Parking Lot, they found an earring, a gold earring, of three rings with a pearl and a diamond in the middle. If that doesn't show Jews were there two thousand years ago, I don't know what does. (laughter)

Mr. Prime Minister, we present this shofar to you with our prayers for the state of Israel, the people of Israel, for the government of Israel. It charges us with our responsibility as well, collectively and personally. It reminds us that the responsibilities that you bear, the state of Israel, are responsibilities for the Jewish people as a whole. And the Jewish people as a whole bear you the responsibility of standing with you, of sounding the shofar throughout the year, to tell the story of truth, to make Israel's case, to defeat the lies and the Ahmadinejads, the distortions and misrepresentations. Your voice today sounded louder than all of the haters and all of the bigots [00:44:00] that spoke. (audience applause)

Well, this is for you. You even get to keep it. Do you want to blow it? (Malcom blows shofar) It works.

Benjamin Netanyahu:

Thank you, (inaudible). I wasn't ready.

Malcom:

Me neither. It's a good thing it worked.

Benjamin Netanyahu:

Todah rabah. Malcolm is terrific, and he doesn't blow hot air.

(laughter) Thank you, thank you very much. Thank you all.

(audience applause)

M2 :

Please stay in your seats. First, Cantor Helfgot -- oh, first, Cantor Fisher. [00:45:00] Dudu?

M1 :

If everybody will just hold their places while the Prime Minister leaves --

M2 :

No, no, he's not leaving until after the anthems.

M1 :

This is kind of a Jewish event, we do things right to left and backwards, so we're having the national anthems at the end.

(laughter)

M2 :

We did it so he could hear them, okay? For the "Star-Spangled Banner," Cantor Dudu Fisher.

Dudu:

Cantor?

M2:

You've been elevated.

Cantor Dudu Fisher:

(singing) "O say can you see, by the dawn's early light. What so proudly we hail, at the twilight's [00:46:00] last gleaming. Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight. O'er the ramparts we walk, were so gallantly streaming. And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air. Gave proof through the night, that our flag was still there. O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave? [00:47:00] O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Cantor Helfgot:

(singing) Kol od balevav penima, nefesh yehudi homiya. Ulfa'ate [00:48:00] mizrach, kadima. Ayin letziyon tsofiya. Od lo avda tikvatenu. Hatikva bat shnot alpayim. Lihyot am chofshi, be'artzenu. Eretz tziyon, yirushalayim. Lihyot am chofshi, be'artzenu. [00:49:00] Eretz tziyon, yirushalayim. (piano chords) (audience applause)

M1 :

That alone was worth the price of admission, thank you very much. We thank you and wish the Prime Minister and his whole party and Mrs. Netanyahu a Shanah Tovah, *g'mar chatimah tovah* [00:49:30 - 00:49:32], and a safe trip. And if you all let them leave safely, that'll help start it off. And we thank Mr. and Mrs. Wiesel for being with us. I want to thank again the Consulate General, Asi Shariv, his deputy, Benji and Francine and all of those there. The 92nd Street Y and the Conference for making this evening possible. Thank you all. Please stay in your place. He's not going to shake hands with everyone, or else he'll be here until after Yom Kippur. So please, give him a chance to leave. [00:50:00] (crowd murmuring) [00:51:00]

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