

Madame Chancellor,

Representative of his Majesty the King of Belgium,

Government Ministers, Ambassadors, Officials of European Union, Members of Parliaments,

Eminences and Excellencies, Imams and Priests Representing the difference faith communities,

Grand Rabbin of Brussels Albert Guigui, Grand Rabbin Fiszon of France, my fellow Rabbis,

Members of the Board of Patrons, Chairman Boris Mints, Mrs. Joelle Aflalo and all other members

Communal leaders, Leaders of the Zentralrat of Germany Dr Graumann Dr Schuster, Mrs. Charlotte Knobloch, Yuri Kanner, Dr Maram Stern, President Markevich

Dear Friends.

The Talmud describes the challenging times of the pre-messianic era in the following terms: "the face of the generation will be like the face of a dog". The modern commentaries on the Talmud interpret this strange saying of the sages in the following way. When a dog walks in front of his master, he will take no more than a few steps before looking back to see if his master is following him, and if not, he will return to his master without delay. This alludes to the flaws of a political leadership

that do not hold the courage of their convictions and will ignore what is right in favour of what they believe will be popular. Like the simple domestic pet they might appear to be out front, but they are certainly not leading. We live today in a world, when more often than not, political decisions are being taken based on opinion polls, rather than on the merit and importance of a political decision.

Madame Merkel, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It took a great deal of courage for a young married pastor from Hamburg in Germany to leave the amenities of the West and leave for the DDR, even before there was a wall. When I look at the history of your parents Mrs Merkel, I cannot help but see parallels with my own history, when I decided to leave the West and go to the Soviet Union to rekindle Jewish life in a communist country. Looking at you Mrs Merkel, I cannot but also think of my children, who have had similar experiences growing up as the children of a member of the clergy in an environment, which contradicted our values of freedoms based on the belief that every human being was created in the image of G-d.

The decision of Chancellor Merkel, to personally intervene in the debate about circumcision to protect the rights of minority faith

communities was taken in the knowledge that it may not be a popular move. It was a decision based not on opinion polls and a populist agenda, but on the deeply held conviction, that it was the right thing to do for Germany and for Europe.

It was you Madame Merkel, who stood up in 2009 and voiced your criticism of the re-admittance of the Holocaust denier Bishop Williamson back into the Catholic Church by a German Pope. Your “leitmotiv” and deepest conviction that Germany and the Jewish State and the Jewish Community, will remain forever tied together through the remembrance of the Shoah, has been a cornerstone of your foreign policy. It is unfortunate that even today, we are plagued not only by individuals but also governments which continue to deny the Shoah on one hand, and threaten another one on the other hand. The words uttered in Teheran are not abstract words, Jewish community centers in South America have been destroyed, and in Bulgaria, Jews were murdered not long ago. We all remember the terrible attack against a Jewish school in Toulouse, where teachers and their students were slaughtered by terrorists inspired by this hate campaign.

I love to quote the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, Lord Sacks, who says that anti-Semitism is like a virus, when the majority of Jews were religious, anti-semitism attacked our religious doctrines, when Jews became more secular, anti-semitism mutated into racism, and today anti-semitism is cloaked in the language of human rights. The disgraceful de-legitimization and demonization of Israel and of religious traditions that have been closely guarded by millions of people for millennia, whilst claiming to be protecting human rights, children's rights and animal rights – that is the new anti-Semitism. To be clear, not everyone who has promoted a secularist agenda in Germany and elsewhere can be called an anti-Semite, but it has become clear that such a philosophy has provided fertile ground for xenophobes to preach about the cruelty and barbarism of our faith. The effect of a law banning circumcision in Germany, would have meant a Germany almost without Jews and without Judaism - Judenrein.

As Europe slowly moves away from its religious Judeo-Christian heritage and becomes more secular, tolerance for religious minorities decreases, and a new intolerance of all things 'different' is prevailing

and conformity has become the new religion.

The Conference of European Rabbis has decided to award this year's Lord Jakobovits Prize for European Jewry to Chancellor Angela Merkel for her leadership and her unwavering battle against any resurgence of anti-Semitism. My friends, I'll be very honest with you. It was not easy for a group of Rabbis, many of whom lost family in the Holocaust to give this award to a German Chancellor.

Not an easy decision, but the correct one.

Other countries with a totalitarian history have failed to fully overcome the dark legacy of the past. Two weeks ago I went with hundreds of Jewish leaders to Hungary, in order to lend support to a community terrorized by the resurgence of political anti-Semitism, where a former ally of Adolf Hitler is glorified, and Jews, including myself are attacked in the streets, there was no "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" there, and therefore the demons of the past are coming back to haunt us today. It is frightening to see national governments not willing to fight this resurgence of hate and racism. Lack of leadership and lack of

political will to face the enemy within is unfortunately the face of some countries, which opted for populism and double messages instead of standing against racism and recurrent anti-Semitism. It is a challenge to the European Union and all citizens of Europe, who are concerned with our common future to find the political tools to isolate the voices of racism and anti-Semitism. The Jewish Community of Europe and the Conference of European Rabbis, the voice of Judaism of Europe, will work together with all governments, countries, nationalities, faith communities, and individuals, who want Europe to be a place where every child and parent can walk safely in the streets, where houses of worship and kindergartens do not have to be guarded by armed police, and where immigrants can fulfil their dreams of providing a better future for their children.

The new united Europe is enduring a very difficult economic period, the transition from an economic to a political union with a single currency is under threat, and were it not for your leadership and example, Madame Merkel, the whole experiment of a European Union might have failed altogether. My greatest wish is that your example of principled leadership should be closely followed across Europe and

across the world.

Madame Merkel, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Germany has risen from the ashes of World War II and under Chancellor Merkel's leadership, continuing the tradition of all post War Chancellors, has become a true friend of the Jewish community. I would like to thank for the support you have given to the renaissance of German Jewry and especially for your support for the re-established Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin. Chancellor Merkel, your words of support for the Jewish community have provided a tower of strength against the resurgence of anti-semitism and intolerance across Europe. For your great leadership and support the CER decided to award you, Madame Merkel, the Lord Jakobovits Prize for European Jewry.

Madame Chancellor may I invite to come forward to the Bima.

I would like to call on Mr Boris Mints, the Chairman of our Board of Patrons to bring the Lord Jakobovits Prize to the Bimah,

I would like to call on Dr Dieter Graumann, the President of the Zentralrat to come and read the inscription on the Prize.

Madame Merkel, it is a great honor to present to you in the name of the Conference of European Rabbis the HaRav Lord Jakobovits Prize for European Jewry,

to you Chancellor Angela Merkel a true leader in Europe in a time of crisis and uncertainty.