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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS HOSTS A HANUKKAH CELEBRATION

Joel Eisdorfer, Senior Advisor to the Mayor: Thank you. On behalf of our gracious host, Mayor Eric Adams, welcome to Gracie Mansion. Tonight we commemorate the celebration of Hanukkah, a holiday full of miracles. We celebrate the miracle of good prevailing over evil, and the miracle of light for eight days instead of one. This is symbolism for the light we get from HaShem, God, even in the darkest of times. In New York City, we are very fortunate to have a strong leader who fights against the evils of darkness and who understands our community, our very own Macabee. A warrior, a hero who has fought to keep us safe while wearing the NYPD uniform. And our Macabee continues to fight to protect all New Yorkers.

With his leadership, we will not allow the forces of darkness and evil to overtake the light of goodness. Relevant to Hanukkah, I had the privilege to join Mayor Adams in Greece at the Mayors' Summit Against Antisemitism. I also have the privilege of watching him up close every day as he continues to lead the fight against antisemitism, crime, darkness, and evil. Please welcome your host and our friend, the 110 mayor of the City of New York, the Honorable Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. Thank you, Joel. And it's just all of you. You are not strangers. Our deep and long relationship throughout the years as we light the menorah this evening. And I want to really thank Consul General Zamir, who... I crisscross him, seems like all over the entire globe, talking about the pursuit of lifting up the Jewish right to exist in a level of peace and prosperity here in the city. We understand that so often in all groups, and the long term friendship that's so important. I think Joel said something significant as I see another good friend has been with me a long time. Abe, good to see you here. I hope you're going to join us in lighting the menorah as well. But fighting antisemitism is not a slogan. It is not something we do solely when we see an act. It's not something that we talk about.

We must infuse into our lives what we mean to each other. And I talk about the relationship. I was just at the Consul General Zamir's home and I'll talk about the relationship with some of you in this room in general. But specifically when I think about Abe and Joe Friedman and Joel Eisdorfer, I was there for each one of Joe's children, the birth of his children. I sat down at his table and his children would come and talk to me and share everything from magic tricks to just general conversation. I watched his wife as she carried Esther, his baby girl. And you cannot tell me that when I walk in a room, Esther just doesn't smile in a special way because I'm there. Those children would know Jordan, my son. And they would grow up knowing each other. And

when we allow each other into our homes, when we sit around the tables together and engage in real conversation, exchange our culture and our religious beliefs, you cannot hate that which you know and that which you appreciate.

If we live in silos, if we believe that if we are a member of a synagogue, we cannot connect with a person that's a member of a Sikh temple or a member of a Baptist church or a member of a mosque or a member of a Buddhist temple. If we believe that because of our faith we must be isolated from other groups, then we are feeding indirectly into the concept of hate without even realizing that. The common denominator of all of our faith tells us that we should be embracing each other. We don't have to believe and pray the same way to the same God to understand that God is a universal emotion and a universal feeling. So we want to stop hate. We have to start at our tables and what's on our plate as we share our food of prosperity with each other.

That's what stopping hate is about. Building out the pipeline of young people like Joe and his children and Abe's and your children and Joel and yours and others. So many of us. Joe Shamie, I know all of his children and many of you that are here today. David, I saw your children born as well. I can go through this room and point to the people in this room that I know not only professionally but I know personally. And we have to start allowing our young people to know each other personally. Because you can't draw a sticker if you know it personally hurt someone. You cannot attack someone because they're from the AAPI community, if you know them personally. That's what 2023 should mean for all of us. We're going to stamp out hate. We are going to demand that social media stop spreading the poison of hate. We are going to demand that those who are arrested for hate crimes are not allowed to plea bargain, but will serve time for doing the crimes.

We're going to demand that our public schools teach the richness of our culture. And then we're going to do what we did in Brooklyn with breaking bread, building bonds. We're going to be creative about holding dinners across our city where we will sit down and enjoy a meal together and talk to each other. We have to be forward facing in fighting hate. I'm ready for this assignment. I'm ready for this task. That's why we went to Greece, because we wanted mayors from all over the globe to understand that there's something unique about the Tel Aviv of America, which is called New York City.

More Jews live in New York than anywhere else outside of Israel. So it must start here in New York City and it must start here in America. It's real. I'm really concerned about the hate we're seeing. So today the symbolism of lighting the menorah should be what we will actualize and lighting the light in all of us. Thank you for coming here and gracing us and Gracie Mansion as we acknowledge Hanukkah and all that it represents. You know more than anyone the importance of moving away darkness with the light. And we want to continue to do so in a very real way. So I thank you. I wish you a happy holiday season and a peaceful holiday season for you and your families. Thank you, Joel.

Eisdorfer: We now have the honor to call upon the consul general of Israel, Asaf Zamir.

Asaf Zamir, Consul General, Consulate General of Israel in New York: Good evening everyone. (Speaks in Hebrew.) Thank you the mayor, my friend. When I was asked to come here this evening, I asked what's the program? And they said, "You are going to say a few words. And then the mayor speaks." I said, "That's easy." And when I arrived they said it's the other way

around. The mayor's going to speak then you need to say a few words. And I said, "I've been here for a year. I've never seen anyone come back from that." I've never seen anyone speak after you and leave an impression. So good luck to me and that's it. Good night. Thank you.

I see a year into my tenure, most of the faces in this room I've already had the great honor to meet and to work with and to realize the wide range of friends that the country, the state of Israel has in this room. The wide range of supporters to the relationship between the United States and Israel. The relationship between Israel and New York. And I want to say one thing about Hanukkah. Not every holiday that we have is relevant today. The history is not always relevant, but the history of Hanukkah is very relevant because there are three things you need to take away with you from Hanukkah is the memory that for over 2,000 years there's been a group of people in the world that haven't particularly liked Jews. And for over 2,000 years, that same group, that same group, always the same group, didn't think Israel was the eternal home of the Jews.

This is not a decade-old story. This is thousands of years of a large group of people that don't like Jews and don't think Israel is their eternal home. And the third thing you need to remember is even though this group exists and even though they believe Israel is not the eternal home of the Jews, and even though they are a larger group than us, we always prevail. We always win. And we always fight for our truth, and we succeed because we're not alone, and we succeed because we have many friends. And all of those friends, as the mayor said, understand one important thing which is it is very important that today's world, we fight for everybody to have the opportunity to believe what they believe and to live the way they want.

The Greeks that invaded Judea didn't want us out of Israel. They said, "You can stay. Just don't show you're Jewish. Become Greek, live as Greeks, not as Jews." And there's not one person in this room that hasn't felt in the past few years that he has something that defines him or her that they should shush about, that they shouldn't talk about, that they should hide. It can be a belief, it can be a heritage, it can be a yarmulke. And it doesn't have to be amongst Jews, it's amongst everyone. So the group of people that's here tonight is united around the universal idea that everyone should have the ability to live the way they want. And everyone should have the ability to believe in what they want. And it is a just fight to make sure that that ability exists, and that is what Hanukkah is for me. It is the eternal understanding of the Jewish right on the land of Israel, and that we will fight, the good fight of everyone who hates us, to make sure that that right continues to exist.

And it is because of all the people devoted to that in Israel and outside of it that we will prevail. I want to thank my mayor and all the people around him and all the people in this room that are part of this administration that are truly fierce friends of the Jewish people and that stand up daily to make sure that we can live our lives freely in times of alarming anti-Semitism. We are very, very lucky to have friends like you. Thank you very, very much. I'm honored to be here representing the state of Israel. (Speaks in Hebrew.)

Eisdorfer: It's my honor to invite Rabbi Potasnik and Devorah Halberstam to the stage, please.

Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, Executive Vice President, The New York Board of Rabbis: Thank you. Thank you for the standing ovation, Mr. Mayor. It's a great honor to be the 110th rabbi in this room tonight as well. And also, Mr. Mayor, I want to begin with an apology on behalf of the Jewish people. We are so sorry for the Hanukkah traffic in New York this time of year,

especially around Rockefeller Center. It'll be over soon. And also I want to thank your commissioner, Fred Kreizman. He asked UJA Federation... Thank you.

He asked UJA Federation, Met Council, Board of Rabbis to be sponsors of this evening tonight. And frankly we've never paid \$125 for a hotdog. (Laughter.) So most grateful. December 2001, the holiday symbols were brought to ground zero. A Christmas tree arrived 20 feet tall, a Hanukkah menorah arrived nine feet tall. A group of carpenters of different faiths came together and they said, "We won't accept this disparity in height." So they built a platform. So the Hanukkah menorah and the Christmas tree were of equal height. To say that in America we stand together as equal partners. So Mr. Mayor, as equal partners, we stand with you and we will not allow antisemites to define our identity.

As equal partners, we stand with you as proud Jews, whether we are in our homes, on the streets or on college campuses today. And as proud Jews, we will work with you when it comes to education of young people. Because we have learned throughout history that education can make you smart, but it doesn't necessarily make you moral. So we all work together to make sure that there is a moral component in that educational process.

Mr. Mayor, I was with you years ago when you were elected state senator and you spoke about a woman who gave you a jar with small coins in it. And she said to you, "Now that you're going to get elected, don't forget the small people." You kept that promise to her. You kept that promise to your mother. And we as equals stand with you in keeping the promise we make to our people as well. Thank you so much. I'm going to ask the mayor to come forward to help light the menorah. And the word mayor by the way means bring light in Hebrew. So you are the mayor and the mayor. And this is good practice for 2040 in the White House.

Mayor Adams: Know before we light the menorah, I think that no one personifies the energy and spirit of bringing light to darkness, turning pain into purpose more than my good friend Devorah, I have to say. During a very terrible moment when she lost her son, she turned towards her faith and she has been a shining light for all of us as we deal with fighting and pushing back against antisemitism. And so we want to give a moment to have Devorah come up and say a few words. Devorah.

Devorah Halberstam, Chair, NYPD Hate Crime Review Panel: Thank you my friend. This is a big surprise to me when they called me up here tonight. I wanted to just say briefly. Mayor, this is Hanukkah, so I feel like I'm in Wheel of Fortune right now where we are spinning the wheel. So since the dreidel stands outside my museum and the winning number is the Gimel, I won it tonight. So what I want to tell you is the first I'm going to give you the gift, and the gift I want to tell you is that in the next two weeks we are having a summit with all your Department of Education. All the superintendents are going to be coming to our museum, and we are going to bring 1 million school children to the museum so they can learn about Jewish culture and history, which is what you wanted. So I think that's a great gift.

On the other hand, I want to say the gift that you have to give me is that first of all, it's my anniversary today, it's my daughter's birthday also. And you should know that this week we did actually have light of darkness, because in this week, the conviction of Ari's murderer and the attempted murderer of 15 kids on the Brooklyn Bridge, he was convicted to 141 and two-third

years in prison this week on Hanukkah. So with that, I want to say happy Hanukkah to all. Let's bring a lot of light to each and every one of you. And thank you my dear friend. Thank you.

Rabbi Potasnik: Thank you. You brought us some light. Let me call upon Eric Goldstein, UJA CEO, to please come forward. David Greenfield, Met Council. Benzi Lebovits of Central Hatzalah. Thank you.

Mayor Adams: And thanks David. We extend a special thanks for being the sponsor tonight.

Rabbi Potasnik: Mr. Mayor, please come. This one candle that stands a little bit higher than the others, which says to all of us, if you could bring light to the world, you stand higher. Everyone. (Recites Jewish prayer.)

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