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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT CONGREGATION
KEHILATH JESHURUN**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Shabbat Shalom.

Congregation: Shabbat Shalom.

Mayor: It's such an honor to be with you and I must say to immediately experience the revelation of understanding that Frank Sinatra actually borrowed from traditional Hebrew.

[Laughter]

I had no idea – I would have thought that would have been reported previously.

[Laughter]

Thank you, Rabbi Weinstock for your leadership of this extraordinary institution. I know Rabbi Lookstein could not be with us today, but like so many New Yorkers and so many people around the world, I look at him with great admiration – what he has done in defense of the Jewish community all over the world, particularly what he did to help Soviet Jews when their needs were so great. So this synagogue has an extraordinary tradition of leadership that's had a bigger impact on the city and the world.

Kehilath Jeshurun is a special place since 1872. You've been a crucial part of the fabric of our city and your sense of larger commitment to all is well known, what you do. The Jewish community of this city and this country, what you do for Israel, what you do for the community of all people [inaudible] and you have persevered. Even when you faced adversity in recent years, you persevered, and this congregation never missed a beat; it kept going. And it will be my joy to join you once again in hopefully just a couple months in hopefully the rebuilt sanctuary. That will be a great moment for this congregation.

The imperative that brought me here was the events that took place in Paris. And that caused me to visit and experience for myself what has been on the minds of the entire world, and certainly of the Jewish community all over the world.

I have had the honor of developing a deep and real relationship with the Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, and her staff. I've been able to see through their eyes a bit what was experienced in these weeks, and I think it is important when we're at those decisive historical moments, not to underestimate them. I doubt anyone here in this congregation does, but I think we have an obligation to analyze the moment, to totally express what it means and what it calls us to do.

This in Paris, the first stop on what was certainly a whirlwind tour, but certainly a very moving and effective tour. The first stop was the Hyper Cacher Market and I met with the owner and I met with leaders of the Jewish community at the market and later at Levens School. It's impossible to be at a site like that and not feel intense emotion and intense sense of the moment and what it tells us. The outpouring of love and support from the Parisian community that was expressed there was powerful unto itself, and hopeful, and at the same time, hearing the stories, the feelings and the experiences of the community leaders, left me with an unmistakable sense of concern, a sense that if something doesn't change we will see the dynamic that is unacceptable to all of us.

As so many people in this room know, Paris has one of the largest Jewish communities in Europe – France the largest Jewish community outside of Israel and the United States. I must say, I reminded the mayor, Mayor Hidalgo, several times, that I have the honor of being the mayor of the city with the largest Jewish community of any city on Earth. And I quizzed the students at the Levens School and I asked them, “What city in the world has the largest Jewish population?” These are very, very advanced students – they were probably middle school age. So I tried to trick them a bit. I said, “Of course it must be Jerusalem, right?” They didn't fall for that. I said, “Of course it must be Tel Aviv, right?” Of course they figured out quickly, New York City. Within our city limits, the largest Jewish population of any city on the earth, which is a point of great pride and for me it's an honor, but also a call be a voice on behalf of this community and to stand up and speak when the world has to pay attention to what's happening around us.

In Paris, what I heard from community members – again, I doubt this will shock anyone in this room – but what I heard was this was not only not an isolated incident, it was something with too many preceding incidents, too many signs before, that had gone under-addressed in France and under-addressed in Europe. And despite this tragedy's particular nature and despite the fact that it did evince a great outpouring of love and support of the Jewish community from all quarters and it has woken up many Parisians, many French citizens, many

Europeans to the depth of the threat to the Jewish community, it is still important to note that there have been warning signs for years and years now that have gone under-acknowledged. The reality could cause us either hope or despair – it could cause inaction or action. My argument is this is a decisive moment that demands action.

So raising of our voices – the use of all of our networks and all of our reach to demand a change in the approach towards the Jewish communities of Europe by European governments. A different kind of protection – a visible, forceful, and consistent protection of this community that sends a signal, in a physical and palpable manner, that no discrimination against the Jewish community will be tolerated and there will be consequences and the community is truly embraced and protected. It is so important to note what a difference that will make. And hearing from community leaders how inconsistent that message has been throughout Europe in recent years and how that may tragically have left too much space for those who plan attacks on the community.

I'm not just saying acts of terror, I'm saying the everyday acts of discrimination, the negativity, the taunting, that again have been too easily accepted in European nations. You've got to remember that just as we have grappled with it in this country, the fight for a truly pluralistic and inclusive society is something that we work on every single day. I can say with authority that we in New York City, although I think we in many ways have a right to be proud of our record and our achievements in terms of inclusion in a relatively unified society despite tremendous adversity, we still learn every day the things we have to do better, the hands we have to reach out, the ways we have to bring people in, the misunderstandings that have to be dispelled.

Our friends in Europe have to attend to this work as well with greater conscientiousness. Now, even in the midst of this tragedy, you see those moments that could give you a sense of what could be on the positive side of the ledger – what could be if the work of inclusion is actually done properly. In the Hyper Cacher Market, in the midst of the attack, a man risked his own life to protect the Jewish customers of the store. His name? Lassana Bathily, a Muslim immigrant from Mali in West Africa working for the market. The attacker burst in and Lassana immediately helped to hide customers where they would be safe in the store, ran to get police help. Afterwards, this unassuming hero was asked, “Why did he do it? Risk his life in the middle of a crisis. Why did he do it?” He said, very simply, “We are brothers.” One of those moments that reminds you of what could be and what we must aspire to.

But my argument is we can't get to that better place if the community is not thoroughly and visibly and consistently protected in the here and now. We can't bridge our way to a future of respect and inclusion for all communities if the protection is not visible and energetic. The fact is Europe has had an anti-Semitism problem for centuries. We thought – we hoped at the end of World War II that something had changed in the consciousness. I'm sure for many it did – I'm sure it was not enough change. I think there's been blatant anti-Semitism in Europe ever since, and sadly we see it coming out in a variety of ways. The challenges are not just from extremists who happen to be Muslim, There is also a xenophobic movement in Europe that looks negatively towards anyone who doesn't fit their idea of a Christian norm. And these challenges on all sides of the spectrum should cause deep concern and should be a cause for all of us to lay down a simple demand: that if the government does not energetically protect its Jewish communities, if it has run afoul of the values that we hold dear, that we as Americans, we as people with work and involvement all over the world, will not tolerate anything but a clear and purposeful, vivid defense of the community.

And the leaders in Paris said for years, they've asked for more police protection, in fact military protection at some sites. This is something that has gone back many, many years [inaudible] we see that kind of response that sends an unequivocal message that the community is protected – and that it's consistently done and not just in a moment of crisis. That is what we need to reach. The warning signs before were under-addressed. It's self-evident because we saw all over Europe people saying after each crisis, "Where will be that transcendent change?" And it never came. After Toulouse, three years ago, a rabbi and three children were shot at a Jewish school – that should have been enough of a warning. In Belgium last year, four people killed in a Jewish museum – that should have been enough of a warning.

I want to emphasize I am not saying we in this city or we in this country are perfect; I'm not saying we don't grapple with these issues everyday ourselves. We all felt deeply the pain last year – the attack on the Jewish center in Kansas City with three lost. We are not immune and we are not immune in this city to acts of bigotry and hate crimes. But one thing that we can be proud of as Americans and New Yorkers is that we have set a clear standard for ourselves. We know how to call a hate crime a hate crime. We know how to say when there's an act of anti-Semitism. We know how to gather the whole community in defense of the Jewish community. We know what an energetic police response looks like. We know what visible protection of Jewish community sites look like. This is the standard we should hold our colleagues in Europe to – and we should do it with great forcefulness. This is a moment when the question has been called and we have to say this over and over again and there has to be a sense of consequence because that is the only way that we can assure ourselves that the message will be seen this time and the action will be taken.

We have a phrase we all use that refers to something unspeakable and unimaginable, and we say, "Never again." And yet in that phrase, in that simple phrase, is an obligation for vigilance and understanding that danger can lurk even where you like to believe it couldn't – that warning signs can never be dismissed. In this city, we hope that we can provide a positive model. Again, it is something we will work on every day. It is something we are committed to – and people see it and know it. Our police force has done an outstanding job of protecting the Jewish community writ large, key Jewish centers. At any time when there is an attack – we had the tragic attack in Tel Aviv a few days ago, we had the horrendous attack on the synagogue in Jerusalem before that. Each time there's an attack on the Jewish community anywhere in the world, the NYPD swings into action and reinforces key Jewish community sites and key Israeli government sites in this city.

We don't have to be asked to do it, we don't think it's a burden – we think it's an obligation. It's a moral obligation; it's an obligation in terms of serving those we represent and it's a smart thing to do. It's smart to lay down that marker not some of the time – each and every time that such violence will not be tolerated and will always be seen as a warning sign. And if that is done consistently, particularly by governments that purport to share our values, it will have the effect of warding off all those who would mean harm to the Jewish community. It will never be perfect, but the more consistent the response, the safer the community will be, the less likelihood that anybody, any force, any individual, any [inaudible] movement, anyone motivated by extremism will believe that an attack on this community will in any way tolerated or be successful in any way. [Inaudible] that this community is thoroughly protected.

You know, there has been a valid discussion of whether people in the French community should now look elsewhere. Some people said to me on my trip, "Would New York be a good home for members of the French-Jewish community?" I said, "Of course we would be a good home; it's a wonderful place to live and a place where the community is embraced and protected." But I don't want to offer that concept forward in the sense of defeat. I don't want to suggest that the Jewish community does not have the right to live anywhere in this world, particularly in a Western democracy. Anyone is welcome here, but I actually think it's our first obligation to make sure they're welcome there – they're protected there. That is our higher calling.

We, I hope, can provide an example. I hope we can show people there is a better way and I hope we can push them with our voices and all of our abilities towards that better way. I remain an optimist that when you see the warning signs and fully take them in, in fact you can change history for the better. But it takes seeing it first and it takes that vigilance to actually find our way to a better path.

And I will reference the Book of Isaiah in that vein, a reminder that even in moments of pain and tragedy, we might find the pathway something better. "The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with dressed stone; the fig trees have been felled, but we will replace them with cedars." That's the spirit that we will bring to the aftermath of this tragedy towards building something better and it is the responsibility of all of us to find [inaudible] people of all faith to create, in this city, a welcoming embrace and a protection of all and to use all in our power to make that the standard, the expectation everywhere in the world.

Thank you and God bless you.

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