

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks at a Hanukkah Celebration

December 7, 2017

Well, I know for a fact there are a lot of happy people in this room. Jerusalem.

Thank you. And Melania and I are thrilled to welcome you and so many wonderful friends to the White House. We wish you a very happy Hanukkah, and I think this one will go down as especially special.

I want to thank Vice President Pence and Karen for joining us this evening. Where are they? Where are they? They're someplace. Come up here, Mike. Get up here. Come on up. [*Laughter*] Come on, Karen. Get up here. They can get under those ropes; they're young and strong. Come on up. Great job. As well as Secretary Mnuchin, Secretary Shulkin.

I also want to thank our incredible First Lady, Melania. She's with you all the way. She has worked so hard to make the White House a truly special place for this joyous season. We've done this so many evenings now, and I think we set a record 2 nights ago. We shook hands for 3 hours and 25 minutes. [*Laughter*] That's not fun. Even though I loved the people, that was not fun. [*Laughter*]

I am also proud that my beautiful grandchildren—Arabella, Joseph, and Theodore—have joined us tonight—right here—as we celebrate with all of you the sacred traditions that they observe each year at home.

This evening we gather to celebrate the story that is told in Jewish homes across the country and all over the world, a story that began more than 2,000 years ago with a tyrant—made practicing the Jewish faith punishable by death. He desecrated the Jewish temple, including the Holy of Holies. But a small band of Jewish patriots rose up, defeated a mighty army, and soon reclaimed their freedom.

But the miracle of the Maccabees did not end there. As they prepared to rededicate the temple, they found only enough oil to light the lamp for a single night. Soon, all were stunned to find that for 8 days, the lamp continued to burn brightly, a sign of God's presence in his dwelling place and a symbol of the faith and resilience of the Jewish people. You do have faith, and you do have resilience.

The miracle of Hanukkah is the miracle of Israel. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have endured unthinkable persecution and oppression.

But no force has ever crushed your spirit, and no evil has ever extinguished your faith. And that is why the Jewish people shine as a light to all nations. And right now I'm thinking about what's going on and the love that's all over Israel and all about Jerusalem. [*Applause*] Thank you.

On behalf of all Americans, I also want to say how grateful I am for Jewish congregations throughout our country. You cherish your families, support your communities, and uplift our beloved country.

Hanukkah is a time for Jewish families around the world to celebrate the miracles of the past and promises of the future. We are proud to stand with the people of Israel and to renew our enduring bond.

This evening we are blessed to have two very special Hanukkah lamps for this celebration. The menorah on my left has been lit every year since the earliest days of our Nation. It comes from the first American Jewish congregation, whose original members came to this land in the 1650s. That's a long time ago. [Laughter] It's a symbol of the history and home the Jewish people made in the United States. Today we are honored to have with us the congregation's 10th spiritual leader since the American Revolution, Rabbi Soloveichik. That wasn't bad. You think that's an easy one? It's not. [Laughter] Thank you, Rabbi, very much for being with us. Thank you, thank you for being with us. We're also—but he's so happy with yesterday, that he doesn't care if I get it exact. [Laughter] Thank you, Rabbi.

We're also deeply honored that Louise Lawrence-Israëls is here to share this evening with us and to make a few remarks. Louise is a Holocaust survivor. The first 3 years of her life were spent in hiding in an attic out of Amsterdam, a row house in Amsterdam—amazing story and amazing situation to be in. Her family could not light the candles that we're about to light this evening, but they lit them in their hearts.

On my right is a lamp that survived the Tarnow Ghetto, a city in southern Poland that ravaged—and was ravaged by the Holocaust. It will remain unlit in memory of that darkest hour and in order to preserve this relic so that we never, ever, ever forget. And you will never forget. We thank God that a woman who was born into that nightmare of oppression now lives in this land of the free and that she, along with everyone here tonight, can light the menorah for all the world to see. And the world is watching.

Today, our Nation is stronger, and our world is more full of promise, because of the Jewish people, the State of Israel, and the faith that burns so brightly in your hearts.

May you all have—[applause]—thank you, thank you, thank you very much. May you all have a truly blessed and happy Hanukkah. God bless you and God bless America. Thank you. And congratulations—big day, big event, very important. Congratulations to everybody in the room.

I'd like to invite Louise to say a few words. Louise.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Karen Pence, wife of Vice President Michael R. Pence; Secretary of the Treasury Steven T. Mnuchin; Secretary of Veterans Affairs David J. Shulkin; Haym Soloveitchik, Merkin Family Research Professor in Jewish History and Literature, Yeshiva University; and Bethesda, MD, resident Louise Lawrence-Israëls.

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