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Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt



[photo site Hulya.jpg](#)

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Post

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Government Ministers, Ambassadors, Officials of European
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Eminences and Excellencies, Imams and Priests Representing
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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 readmittance 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

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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.

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[photo site Hulya.jpg](#)

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Introduction speech at the Lord Jakobovits Prize given to Mrs Angela Merkel

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[photo site Hulya.jpg](#)

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