

October 2017

Dear Friend of Israel,

The holiday season is upon us. Rosh HaShana, the Jewish New Year, began on the 20th of September. **We spent two incredible mornings in the synagogue, praying together, singing, and listening as the shofar was blown to call us to G-d, to urge us to repent and to connect us to our souls,** to our most intimate thoughts and our innate spirituality. We enjoyed festive holiday meals with friends and family. And we walked around the community, greeting our friends and neighbors, all the while basking in the feeling that we share a common purpose, a common presence before G-d, a common destiny as a nation, regardless of our individual destinies.

We approach Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, with a mixture of joy and anxiety. **I always look forward to this amazingly special and holy day. We fast all day, not drinking or eating from just before sundown until after sunset the next day – a total of 25 hours!** We spend several hours in the evening and most of the next day in the synagogue praying. We pray together in song and we pray silently. We pray for a good year and hope that G-d will forgive us our sins and grant us life, good health, happiness and good fortune. **We know not what the coming year will bring, hence the anxiety. But we are joyous in the notion that G-d is merciful,** that He has given us this annual opportunity to come closer to Him and to join together as a nation in such a spiritual way.

I believe that these holidays are gifts from G-d. **In His wisdom, He has commanded us to keep these holidays, and has set forth the outlines of their observance in the Bible. The Bible is the ultimate gift that G-d has given us, the Nation of Israel, and through us, His messages have reached the world.** Although I don't believe the nations of the world, are commanded to celebrate these holidays, I share our experiences with you because I do believe that you and all human beings in this wonderful world, can derive value from them. Our traditions speak volumes of our understanding of the Bible and as I communicate them to you, fellow lovers of G-d and followers of the Bible, I feel that you, too, are able to gain a richer, more profound understanding of what G-d expects of the human beings He has created.

This is probably the most important aspect of the work of CFOIC Heartland that I have been involved in all these years. Christians and Jews are communicating, in ways and at levels never before in our history. We have reached across a huge divide and we stand together for so much. I am so grateful to G-d for placing me in this position, for enabling me to connect with so many wonderful people all over the globe and to do my little part in the fulfillment of my role as a Jew, as articulated by Isaiah – to be a light unto the nations. I am humbled by this directive and pray to G-d that I can continue filling this role in the year ahead. May G-d bless you all in this New Year.

Sincerely,



Sondra Oster Baras
Director, Israel Office

P.S. Every year we give you the opportunity to help families in need with boxes of groceries during the holiday season of Rosh Hashanah and Sukkot. And every year you respond with incredible generosity! So many families are helped and encouraged through your small act of kindness. Your gift today of only \$40 will help one family have food during the holidays. It is not too late to donate!