



August 2020

Dear Friend of Israel,

It seems incredible that just a few short weeks ago, it seemed like Israel had nearly defeated the COVID19 virus. Especially when we compared our numbers to those of countries and areas around the world with similar populations, we could certainly pat ourselves on the back and feel good that the difficult time in isolation worked – very few people were catching the virus and even fewer were in serious condition.

And then we opened up. There was enormous pressure on the government to open the schools because if the schools were not open, parents of school-children would not be able to return to work. And this was particularly acute because grandparents, the usual go-to solution during school holidays, had been taken out of the equation. Grandparents are in the high risk category for COVID19 and the last people who were supposed to be exposed to their grandchildren. First the elementary schools opened and then the high schools. Then the virus came back with a vengeance.

Within a relatively short time, the virus was showing up all over the country. The government had just been formed and was already struggling to keep up. The result was chaos. Today, the lack of confidence in our government has skyrocketed as a result of the virus. Businesses such as catering halls and cultural establishments which had just opened had to close again. The tourism industry is totally dead with no end in sight. The Ministry of Education is trying to figure out how to open schools without mass spread of the infection.

I know that many of you are facing similar issues in your own country. Israel is no different. But Israel is different because it is a country that is loved by so many outside of our country. **When I write these words to you, I know you want to know how we are doing because you care, because you love our country, our people and together we love the G-d of Israel.** By the time you read this letter, the situation may well have changed, for better or for worse. One of the most difficult parts of this pandemic is its lack of predictability.

So where does that leave us? **We must put our faith and trust in G-d** that He will guide us through this and that He will provide wisdom to our scientists that they may find a cure or a vaccine as soon as possible. **But we must also look around us and ask ourselves, what can we do? Who can we help? Who can we comfort and encourage? Reaching across the seas, we can each comfort each other.** We can each help each other as we share a crisis like never before. And that thought, in and of itself, gives me comfort.

Sincerely,

Sondra Oster Baras
Director, Israel Office

P.S. Please consider making a donation to help families in need during the upcoming holiday of Sukkot. With the uncertainties we face this summer, the fall holidays are going to be especially difficult for many families. Thank you for your dedication to pray and bless so many in the Biblical Heartland.