



June 2023

Dear Friend of Israel,

We have just celebrated the holiday of Shavuot, Pentecost, marking the Revelation at Sinai, exactly seven weeks after Passover. In many ways, it is considered an addendum to Passover, **a reminder that the Exodus was only the beginning of the story. G-d did not redeem us from slavery to let us loose in a world of anarchy and unlimited freedom.** Rather, He released us from the cruel Pharaoh to give us a true, just and righteous master – the G-d of Israel. And it is at Mt. Sinai that we crowned G-d as our King – as we declared that whatever G-d would command us, we would obey. (Exodus 19:8).

It is this relationship between G-d and the Nation of Israel that defines us as a people ever since Sinai. **There is a beautiful Midrash that tells us that all the souls of Israel throughout the generations stood at Sinai and accepted G-d's word.** To me, this signifies the eternity of our relationship with G-d. For centuries, Christians were convinced that G-d had severed His relationship with us. Today, so many Christians understand that is bad doctrine, impossible to reconcile with an all-knowing G-d.

Each year **Jews study the Torah, the Bible, its commentaries and related writings, all night long on Shavuot. While I am a bit past the age of staying up all night, my husband and I do go to late night classes, managing to stay awake until about 1 am.** The streets are full of people of all ages, walking to and from the various synagogues where classes are being held all night. Some classes are held in private homes. Others study in small groups or on their own, in homes or in the study halls of the synagogues. It is an amazing sight to behold – the love for G-d's word that we express that night.

In declaring G-d our King, we express our conviction that He alone rules our lives. We do our best to follow His ways and it is not always easy. Sometimes, personal tragedy makes it difficult to understand the justice of His ways. But we find comfort in the knowledge that we cannot understand everything, that G-d is above us as the all-knowing, all-understanding G-d of Israel, who is also our Father. We don't have to understand. **There is comfort in knowing we can just submit, and release our questions, our hopes and prayers, to G-d.**

We are experiencing troubling times in Israel today. I cannot begin to understand how it will all end up. **But I know G-d will continue to bless us. I also know that He expects us to do what we know to be right and true – to follow His word,** to love our people and our fellow human beings, and to settle His land. G-d will surely see to the rest.

Shalom,

Sondra Oster Baras  
Director, Israel Office

**P.S. This month we are giving you the opportunity to honor the men in your life with a donation to help fatherless boys in Bet Hagai.** This certificate can be a Father's Day gift or a gift that is given any time you want to honor and bless those who mean so much to you. Thank you for blessing Israel and helping to rescue young boys from a cycle of dysfunction and neglect.