



July 2023

Dear Friend,

Wherever I go and whenever I meet some of our Christian friends, **a major topic of conversation is the new progressive agenda.** I don't believe I am exaggerating if I say this has become one of the greatest threats to values that have been held and honored for centuries by people who see themselves as part of the Judeo-Christian world.

Israel is one of the most family-oriented countries in the world. In most western countries, the birth-rate is steadily declining way below replacement level. In Israel, our birth-rate is holding steady and continues to rise in some sectors. **It is well-known that religious families have many children in Israel, but today, even secular families are having at least three children,** up from an average of two just a few decades ago. Playgrounds and play centers are public places in Israel, daycare is publicly funded from three months of age, and mothers enjoy maternity leave, enabling them to have many children without fear of losing their jobs.

**In Judea and Samaria, family is even more central than in the rest of Israel.** Young families move to new neighborhoods in Judea and Samaria, knowing they will find many other young families like themselves. Parents know they will easily find and befriend other young parents at the local playground and synagogues cater to families in so many ways. Children are treasured in the synagogue and welcomed, even when they make a bit of noise. And many young families move back to the communities where they grew up, enjoying the support and extra pairs of hands that grandparents are joyously providing. As a grandparent myself, I can attest to the amazing joy I feel when my local grandchildren come over for a visit – our house is their home away from home in so many ways.

And that is how it should be. **Our families strengthen us. They anchor us in our identities and in our beliefs. It is no coincidence that the Bible opens with Genesis, which is a book about families,** and particularly about the first family of Israel, who becomes the Nation of Israel. Let us keep this in mind as we view the changing world around us. Let us look inward and strengthen our own families. And I want to invite you to connect with us, the People of Israel, in a more profound way. Visit with us and experience the family life that permeates our communities. Connect with us as we look after our children and create better spaces for them to grow and develop, being nurtured by Biblical values and a strong Biblically-based community. **We may not be able to fight the onslaught of progressive values that surround us, but together we may well be able to protect our families from that onslaught.**

Shalom,

Sondra Oster Baras  
Director, Israel Office

**P.S. This month we are asking you to help teens in Zufim.** Your donation to help renovate the Youth Center in Zufim will strengthen Biblical values in the heart of Biblical Israel.

**P.P.S.** If you will be in Israel on October 2nd, I would like to personally invite you to join our exclusive one day tour to Samaria. See then enclosed flyer for details or visit our website at: [www.cfoic.com/feast](http://www.cfoic.com/feast).