

Dear Friend of Israel,

April 2024

As I am writing to you now, **there is a palpable sense of apprehension in the air throughout Israel.** In its ongoing campaign in Gaza, the IDF has its sight set on dismantling Hamas' last remaining bastion in Gaza, located in Rafah. This operation will undoubtedly pose significant challenges for the IDF as Hamas is prepared to make its final stand fighting amongst a sea of hundreds of thousands of non-combatants. Meanwhile, the clock appears to be ticking down to a major confrontation with Hezbollah on the northern border. It is unclear when Hezbollah will launch its tens of thousands of long-range guided missiles at Israel, nor do we know if and when Israel will escalate its military campaign to finally put a stop to the incessant rocket attacks that have been raining down on communities in the north since October 7th.

Amid this tension, **the Jewish people celebrate two auspicious moments on the Jewish calendar: Purim and Passover.** While distinct in their own respects, both holidays represent distinct aspects of redemption. Purim celebrates the miraculous salvation of the Jewish people in the Persian empire from a decree of annihilation. Thankfully, God - intervening behind the scenes as a hidden Puppet Master - not only nullified the decree but reversed it on our enemies. Yet this most fortunate turnaround of circumstances for the Jewish people offered only a limited redemption. Queen Esther remaining in the palace with King Ahasuerus and only a fraction of the Jewish population returning to the Land of Israel even after Zerubbabel rebuilt the Temple.

Exactly thirty days following Purim, **Passover celebrates the miraculous and complete redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt.** Each plague was so supernatural in nature that Pharaoh's magicians recognized them as coming from the "finger of God." (Exodus 8:15) The Exodus culminated in a total victory. Pursuing the Jews into the Red Sea, the Egyptian army was destroyed, sealing our complete redemption from Egypt. Presently, Hamas, having openly threatened to replicate the October 7th attacks, must be dealt with decisively. Moreover, our hearts yearn for the speedy liberation of every one of the dozens of hostages who remain in captivity under the shackles of Hamas. **The people of Israel aspire to emulate this triumph of Exodus.**

This time of year, offers a profound opportunity for the People of Israel and our dear friends, such as yourself, to experience the spirit of triumph the Israelites felt as they looked back towards Egypt from the shores on the other side of the Red Sea. As we celebrate Purim and Passover, I extend my heartfelt blessings to you and all, invoking divine strength and resolute determination in our collective quest for victory against our adversaries. **Together, may we experience a complete and final redemption that will change the world as we know it for the better.**

Shalom,

Shmuel Junger
Director
Christian Friends of Israeli Communities