

April 2025

Dear Friend of Israel,

Jewish history is one long national story of uncertainty. We never know what the next day or year will bring. For centuries, we were like a lamb wandering among 70 wolves. **We carried with us the weight of exile with all the scars of expulsions, crusades, inquisitions and blood libels.** They were not just historical markers for us but became part of our soul and etched into our national memory.

Then, **after two thousand years, we finally came home.** We told ourselves that maybe—just maybe—we had finally reached a place where we could rest. But peace and tranquility has never lasted long for the Jewish people. Time and again, all the wars, terror attacks and threats that have loomed over us like storm clouds reminded us that we continue to hold our breaths—**That we are still waiting for the day when we can sit under our vine and fig tree with no fear in our hearts.**

At first glance, the Purim holiday, a day on which we laugh, dance and symbolically drown out the noise of our enemies, appears to offer us a temporary reprieve from carrying the countless burdens of our history on our shoulders. But **beneath all the costumes and joy lies a most sobering truth.** The Talmud instructs us NOT to say Hallel (a series of celebratory Psalms traditionally recited on holidays) on Purim because ultimately, even after our miraculous salvation from Haman's plot to annihilate the Jews in the Persian empire, **we were never fully freed as we remained subjects to the Persian King Ahasuerus.**

But are we not free now? Thank God, we are no longer subdued by chains, and we have returned home to the Land of Israel. At the same time, we must also acknowledge that freedom is not just about exercising sovereignty in our land but about the state of our national soul—whether we live in fear and let the shadows of our past dictate how we walk into the future or whether we believe, deep down, that tomorrow will be better than today. **Unfortunately, to this day, we live in much uncertainty. Even the strongest and bravest amongst us recognize just how fragile life can be** and that one moment of triumph can be followed by tragedy, God forbid.

This is where Purim is complemented by Passover. **While we are reminded on Purim about the fragility of life, Passover assures us that complete redemption can and will in fact happen again.** The Exodus from Egypt was not just about escaping slavery and physical persecution but about accepting a state of being free. We escaped slavery by choosing faith over fear, refusing to be prisoners of our past and forever running and fighting just to exist. Instead of waiting for the next evil decree to befall us or the next moment to be reminded that we still have enemies who hate us, we should yearn to always have the strength to embrace the promise of Passover—the promise that we were not just saved to survive but to live, hope and build a future in which fear no longer defines us.

This is our challenge. **This is our calling—to step beyond a state of survival and into one of freedom that no king, enemy or force in this world can take away.** I am honored to have friends like you helping and supporting us in this endeavor. May God continue to bless you!

Shmuel Junger
Executive Director

P.S. «salutation», I am honored to have friends like you helping and supporting us. Please consider sending a little extra gift this month to help a special needs child enjoy camp before Passover or to give a hungry family food vouchers before the holiday.