

WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS

RONALD S. LAUDER
PRESIDENT

H.E.
Reuven Rivlin
President of the State of Israel
Beit HaNasi
3 HaNassi Street
92188 Jerusalem

New York, 28 April 2020

Dear President Rivlin,

Please accept my heartfelt good wishes—and those of more than 100 Jewish communities around the world—on the 72nd anniversary of the establishment of the Jewish State. Even in the midst of the present unprecedented global calamity and an unimaginable disruption of civilization, none of us forgets for even a second the great miracle that occurred in 1948 when the course of Jewish history was changed, and the Jewish people reasserted its sovereignty over our ancient homeland. The existence of Israel is proof of the Jewish people's resilience, creativity, and hope.

We are relieved to see that Israel has been coping with the Covid-19 pandemic better than most countries, and we are especially proud of the work of Israeli researchers who are at the forefront of the struggle to develop a vaccine. All of us are enormously moved by the empathy and humility of the doctors and nurses treating those afflicted with the deadly virus. These medical professionals and scientists are among Israel's greatest and most effective ambassadors, and we would very much like to see an ambitious initiative to bring their knowledge and expertise to Jewish communities in the Diaspora and to the wider world in which we live.

At the same time, our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the more than 200 Israelis who have died from this dreadful disease, and with all those who are hospitalized or remain affected by it. We must remember that we are indeed one people with a common destiny, not only in good times but especially when we are beset by adversity.

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We Jews are a cosmopolitan people, and both the State of Israel and our Jewish communities are demonstrating exceptional fortitude and cohesion in the face of the pandemic. Our difficult hour is also our finest. At a time when darkness seems to be descending upon the world, together we are lighting the candles of dedication, determination, and love. Now we must also raise our eyes and look toward tomorrow. As the pandemic begins to abate—with the resulting devastation plain for all to see—we must understand its implications for the near and far future.

Never before has the challenge of Jewish solidarity been greater. More than ever, it is clear just how dependent we are on one another. It is doubly clear that we must overcome that which divides us, rediscover what unites us, and above all, support one another.

The coronavirus does not differentiate between observant and secular Jews, or between Haredi, Reform and Conservative Jews. The imperative to nurture a strong, unified Jewish community grows exponentially in the face of the dangers surrounding us. Now is the hour for unity and harmony—especially when we see the resurgence of vicious antisemitism in so many places around the world. Like in Medieval times, Jews and the Jewish State stand accused of spreading the virus for their own nefarious designs.

Today, we must renew the credo of “kol Yisrael arevim ze-lazeh.” We must re-embrace our age-old ethos that we are all responsible for one another.

In the post-coronavirus world, globalization will wane and nationalism will rise. Accordingly, we must act now to foster the Jewish spirit of enlightened, generous, humanistic, and democratic nationhood. And we must vow—as a unified extended family—to confront all that still lies ahead with courage and determination.

With warmest personal best wishes on this uplifting day in our calendar,

Am Yisrael Chai!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ronald S. Lauder". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'R'.

Ronald S. Lauder
President