



ראש הממשלה  
PRIME MINISTER

December 8, 2021  
ד' טבת, תשפ"ב

Dear Mark and Eric,

As Prime Minister of Israel, my primary responsibility is to protect the citizens of the Jewish state. However, as you are well aware, I have always stressed the role that the Government of Israel – and especially its prime minister – must play as a leader in the Jewish world. It is in this second role that I am writing to you today, as leaders of global Jewry's largest community, to update you on the work of the government to address the COVID pandemic, and to share some thoughts about our recent decisions regarding the Omicron variant. In doing so, it is my hope that you will share our love and concern with the leadership of Jewish communities across North America, to whom my government is deeply committed and whom we wish to welcome back to Israel as soon as possible.

The COVID pandemic has ravaged the world for close to two years, and the Government of Israel has had to take some extraordinary steps in order to try to control the epidemic, protect our citizens and safeguard Israel's economy. We could not have imagined that many of the steps taken would ever have been necessary, but ultimately, they were required in order to save the lives of tens of thousands of Israelis.

When the Omicron strain first emerged, Israel's top public health experts and scientists, with whom I consulted extensively, were unwavering in their recommendations that urgent and precautionary steps needed to be taken to avoid a potential major health crisis in Israel. One of the critical components of those temporary measures was to close the borders to non-citizens for a limited period.

Mr. Mark Wilf, Chair of the Board of Trustees  
Mr. Eric D. Fingerhut, President and CEO  
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USA

Jerusalem, Israel



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We did not take this decision lightly, and we are acutely aware of the severe hardship and disruption it is causing people around the world, particularly members of the Jewish community. I deeply regret any pain felt by you and those in your community, who are cherished members of our global Jewish family. The close relationship between Israel and world Jewry is a fundamental value of the State of Israel, and remains a cornerstone of my government's policy, despite my having to take this step.

We fully understand the critical importance of visits by North American Jews to Israel. We are also very conscious of the thousands of individuals who had been or are planning family visits, bar mitzvahs, weddings and more, and for whom the decision was a very serious blow.

We are constantly monitoring and reassessing the situation, and we are working hard to allow life to return to normal while still maintaining our number one priority of protecting the health and lives of our citizens. We are well aware of the pain being caused, and you have my word that we will do all we can to help Jews around the world visit Israel again as soon as possible.

Rest assured that we are doing everything in our power to solve this crisis as soon as possible, in order to allow visits to the Jewish state and maintain the supreme importance of the relationship between our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Naftali Bennett'.

Naftali Bennett