

THE COMMITMENT TO THE ISRAEL MUSEUM

Dear James,
dear friends and colleagues here at the Museum and at the Youth Wing,
dear family, dear guests,

I cannot tell you how touched and humbled I am to receive today this Honorary Fellowship, in the past bestowed to such eminent personalities from Germany as our former President, belated Dr. Richard von Weizsäcker and our founding member of the German Friends, Erich Marx.

When these two – our former President and Erich Marx – asked me in the name of the members some 9 years ago if I would consider leading the German Friends, I first hesitated due to so many other obligations.

Then I visited the Israel Museum extensively and everything changed. The beauty of this place, the warmth of the staff and people so dedicated to the museum and above all the exceptional Youth Wing - better than any other in any other museum of the world - immediately convinced me.

For me the Israel Museum is a symbol of all the good that Israel stands for. It is a light tower of universal culture, unique in all of the Middle East, it sends a message of humanity and what it consists of and it shows that culture is the true bridge between people, religions and ethnicities.

And of course it strives for continued excellence, having already established itself among the best in the world.

Culture indeed connects people and countries, The broad and worldwide network of the friends from all of the world is the best proof of that but even more than that it is the museum itself with its timeless architecture and its collections from archaeology to modernism, from Herodes to Richter, from Islamic Art to Jewish Synagogues from all over the world.

Indeed: culture also connects Germany and Israel in its friendship – a relationship that will always be special – never quite normal.

Precisely this is also reflected in the preamble of the Charta of the German Friends. In all that we did over the years – be it bringing important works of German artists to the museum, helping out with important exhibitions and catalogues, organizing events with many interested visitors and above all supporting as partners the intercultural Jewish-Arab Program “Bridging the Gap” at the Youth Wing – in all of this it is the idea of that bridge that is guiding us.

Dear friends, these are difficult and challenging times for our societies. We all need to take a stand and each one of us has to fight for all the precious values of the free world if we want to keep them. Friends of Israel around the world are particularly challenged – in many ways.

We, the German Friends of the Israel Museum will continue to give our best. This honour today which I am receiving in representation of all the members of our association back in Germany will motivate us further to do so.

Thank you so very much!