

This last week has been a busy one for the Federation and its leaders. Last Sunday, Federation leaders met with Matthew McHugh, the Congressman from our own 27th district of New York. The main topic of discussion with Mr. McHugh was the Middle East. The leaders present conveyed, in no uncertain terms, their feelings that Israel has been and is being unduly pressured to make concessions that would endanger her security. We spoke about secure borders, about the need to pressure other Arab "friends" of America to support the movement toward peace, and the inviolate nature of an Israeli Jerusalem.

At the same time, this week, our community has been blessed with two delightful visitors from Israel. Two Israeli high school students are visiting our local high schools, church and synagogue groups through a program developed by the Israeli government in cooperation with our local Federation. Their mission is simply to meet with their peers, American high school students, to acquaint them with life in Israel from the point of view of a teenager. Their goal is to make the foreign nation of Israel real and tangible—and more personal—to the teens with whom they are meeting during their visit.

And this past week has also seen the continuation of our local UJA-Federation campaign and the visit to our community of Dr. Eliezar Jaffe, professor of Social Work at Hebrew University. Dr. Jaffe is the father of Project Renewal, Israel's and American Jewry's joint venture, unprecedented in history, to eradicate hardcore pockets of poverty in Israel, that have existed for generations. It was Dr. Jaffe who was the primary resource person on the government commission which ultimately recommended and designed Project Renewal.

So much of our time, as a community is occupied with work for Israel. So much of our thoughts, as individuals is occupied with our memories of her, if we have visited, or wishes if we have not.

Israel.

What is the tie that binds us to her and her to us? "I went to a foreign country, a country like a dozen others when I went to Israel," says a recent returnee from a mission. "But when I left to return home, I left behind my homeland, my family."

Israel.

Ever since those first Jews driven into exile cried by the waters of Babylon to return to Zion, we have held her dear. No other nation has been so coveted by her friends—or her enemies. With no great natural resources, no great inherent wealth, Israel, for two thousand years, has been the vortex of war, slaughter, revolt and conquest. All who have seen her have sought to possess her.

We have fought wars, built a nation, sent her our money, and—some of us—our children.

Israel is the symbol of our survivability as a people. Israel is not all of Judaism. Israel is our history—the history of the Jewish people. It is our triumph, proof that we are a nation and will always be one.

Israel. Our past, our present, our future.

Stanley H. Bard