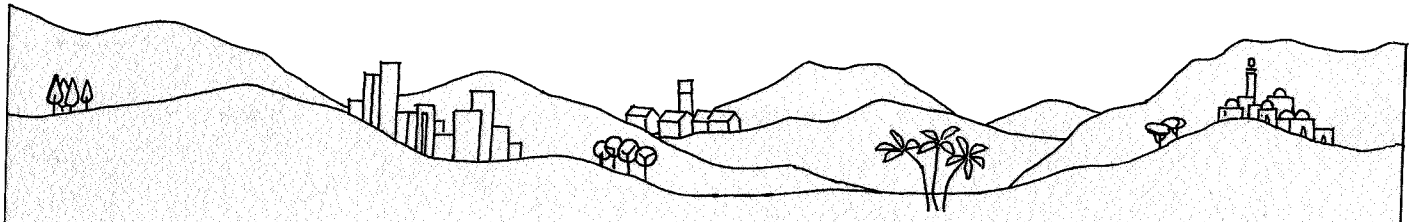


• MY ISRAEL • MY ISRAEL • MY ISRAEL • MY ISRAEL • MY ISRAEL • MY ISRAEL •



In 1948, when the State of Israel was established, the leaders of the day believed that the great domestic challenge facing them would be in absorbing the millions of immigrants who would rush to move here. After all, this was the Jewish homeland; wouldn't the Jews want to come home?

History has shown that most Jews have chosen to stay in their countries of birth. To them Israel is an ideal, a place to pray for, to collect money for, to read about in the newspapers—a dream.

But there is a small percentage of people who do come to Israel to make their homes. They are themselves dreamers, but dream-ers who are not content just to dream. They are the people who have the determination and the faith to work at making their dreams the reality. They are doctors and lawyers, teachers and engineers, farmers and writers, students and homemakers.

We, at AACI, have asked a few of these people to tell us about their Israel, about what life is like for them here. In their stories we find a common thread, a satisfaction with their lives and with their homeland-turned-home.

WORKING TOWARDS CHANGE

by Professor Eliezer D. Jaffe

"My" Israel is still on the way. While fascinated and unimaginably thankful for what we have created here (and for the privilege of being a part of it), I am deeply concerned about where we are going and what has yet to be done.

Although forced to pull together in the Diaspora to preserve our identity and pride as Jews, life in our own land has produced an overabundance of individuals and erstwhile political leaders on the right and left whose egos, personal aspirations, and machinations are a disgrace to the State. This unabashed exploitation of State resources, media and power have much to do with our impossible electoral system which breeds lack of accountability and institutionalized political instability, under the guise of citizen "involvement." Everyone knows the system is rotten and wasteful, but no one has the courage to change it for fear of losing power, and the State be damned.

Our internal struggles in the areas of religion, borders, definitions of "democracy," and social policy are all in great flux, and provoke super-heated debate and activity. These are all crucial, healthy issues which will find a workable arrangement one day between the contesting schools of values and thought. Indeed, the struggle to gain power and influence in order to implement one's values is the essence of personal and political involvement, and this should be encouraged. What bothers me, however, are the extremes to which the fringes often go, and the rather weak government enforcement of the majority's personal rights. And I will never accept the demagoguery of "leaders" on the right or the left who persistently use the idiotic antics of the fringes to character-assassinate whole categories of hapless citizens.

Ironically, most of the gravest problems facing our State are created (and can be solved) by our own

doing. Instead of copying much of the garbage of the egocentric, goods-oriented West, many of us have forgotten or don't care any longer about searching together for the uniqueness that reflects a Jewish State and homeland. What is worse, too many people here take our State for granted, instead of appreciating the unbelievable fragility of this astounding enterprise.

My pessimism about our present state is often offset by daily encounters with beautiful Israelis who give tirelessly of themselves to help others, who work constructively for change, without rage or fanfare, and who love this country for what they can give to it rather than for what they can get out of it. We must find a way to harness these forces, wherever they can be found, in order to bridge the gap between the promise and the present. Personally, I can't think of a better way to spend one's life.