

Israel, Magnet for Youth

By Judy Carr

A group of long-haired young Americans got onto the bus outside Ben Gurion Airport on arrival in Israel, and already they were enthusing about the country... "A desk at the airport where they gave us information about hostels and other facilities. There was nothing like that in any other country."

A dark-haired girl said excitedly, "All over Rome, where we just came from, nothing but kids, kids, set free and exploring the world. For the first time there is no one to put us into compartments and stick labels on us and tell us what to do."

This partly explains the attraction of Israel for young people from what are called good backgrounds. They are sick of middle-class social pressures, seeking freedom and that indefinable entity "Themselves." A boy from a wealthy home in America said, "At home all I did was fight with my parents. Here there are no pressures, I am free to be myself."

In Israel there is an address and a helping hand for the kids, who need not feel themselves

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lost and stranded. Women's organizations arrange hospitality and give information and for those who gravitate towards traditional Judaism, religious Jews extend a beautiful welcome. But the address with the greatest attraction for the young is the Kibbutz.

In the Kibbutzim the young people are assured of food and rudimentary accommodation if they will do a day's work. But the work is like no other kind they have undertaken, tougher than the toughest exam and more idealistic than marching. A blonde girl on Kibbutz Sasa in the heights of Galilee said while digging at a stretch of rocky ground, "We're making a lawn. We're making green things grow with our own hands. It's a terrific experience."

A boy wandered into the office of the Kibbutz and asked to work... do just any work to stay. He gazed with mute hero-worship at the taciturn Kibbutznik who said without lifting his eyes, "They need volunteers at Malkiya." "Malkiya..." exclaimed the boy with a thrill in his voice. "That's five kilometres from the Lebanese border..."

"Oh, they're bound to let you sleep in a barn," said a more communicative Kibbutznik.

Jerusalem is a magnet for these young people... And anyone who talks about the right of Jerusalem to remain "Israeli" should watch these young people meeting and mingling in the bazaars, conversing amicably with Arabs and Israelis alike, and absorbing the beauties of the Holy City. There are all classes, nationalities and religions, students, hippies, members of Evangelical sects, tough guys from the Jewish Defense League. The world has not grasped how important Jerusalem has become as a meeting-place for youth from many nations.

But there are also some disappointed youth... Those who go to Kibbutzim and cannot fit in and get picked on as outsiders. Boys and girls with psychological disturbances who only find a tired official to give them the address of a psychologist. Young people from wealthy spoilt backgrounds who do not really want their freedom.

Israel may be demoralized and misunderstood by most of the world and torn by internal troubles. But when young people from all over the world flock to her beleaguered borders, she can hold up her head. The young people seeking identity find a message in Israel. Maybe the UN and the nations who uphold it should absorb the fact that not all the younger generation are on the side of Arafat.

NEW YORK -- The Hebrew University of Jerusalem is inviting applicants for the Israel Jefroykin Award, \$2,000, endowed by the Jewish National Fund, for research on Eastern European Jewry. Final date for submission of entries is July 31, 1975, to Academic Secretary, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Givat Ram Campus, Jerusalem.

LAWRENCE, N.Y. -- Congregation Kol Yisroel Chaverim announced the free distribution of a new publication called "Tje Tisha B'Av Home Reader," for the Ninth of Ab observance which occurs this year on Thursday, July 17th. Send self-addressed envelope to Rabbi Dobin, Congregation Kol Yisroel Chaverim, Box 11, Lawrence, New York 11559.

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