

Dayle,

I believe you asked "how are things in Israel?" Since I am probably the only person you know who is actively living in the country, a rather small country that seems to monopolize a good bit of international news, let me share some simple observations. In the States, from what I have observed, the attitude toward Israel, maybe unduly negative due to the "squad," the four members of congress who are ready to attack Israel on moment's notice. They led the negative votes against funding the Iron Dome, the system that saved thousands of lives from Rocket bombardments. Oddly enough a rocket doesn't discriminate. It doesn't say, "for Jews only."

20% of the Israeli citizens are Arabs. They're members of parliament, they vote, one is a member of the Supreme Court and since the last election, they are in the ruling coalition. Anecdotally, The CEO of Bank Leumi is an Arab Israeli and the chief of Neurology at Hadassah hospital, someone who treats my wife, is also an Arab Israeli. They are pleased with U.S. support of the Iron Dome. Granted everything is not wonderful, but much better than some will lead you to believe. The Palestinian situation is another issue which is fraught with emotion. I had said that they are held captive. It's so complex but let me review one element. After 1948, Arabs either left or were forced out. Four generations of Palestinians are still in various DP centers. At the same time close to a million Jews were forced out of Arab countries. They are not in DP camps, but all are citizens of Israel. In Kuwait, for example, four generations of Palestinians may not become citizens. In contrast, present day Syrians, seeking political asylum in Europe, will not be meeting the same fate. It's a political issue. I should say that I don't agree with all Israeli policies, nor do I agree with all U.S. Policy, but like the U.S., Israel is a democracy.

Sooo, let me share one observation and if interested, I shall share more. In a few weeks, with the good Lord's blessing, I shall be 89. I am blessed in many ways. One, I have lived, for periods of time, in many areas. I went through the depression as a kid in Camden, I lived in South and North Jersey, I spent two years as an MP in Germany at the end of the occupation, I lived in Indiana for graduate school, I lived and taught in Japan for a short period of time; I taught in China for a semester in a teacher's college and now I am living in Israel in the desert. I am an observer of culture. Part of that observation reflects on how a culture treats its elderly. Japan treats its elderly with the utmost respect. You will see several generations living under the same roof. There is even a "respect for the elderly day" in Japan, Keiro-no Hi. That's just one example. Let me give you an example of what happened to me in China. We were sitting at a large table with about a dozen faculty members. There was a lazy susan in the center of the table with all sorts of goodies. Nothing was happening. It seemed a bit awkward. I was the only non-bilingual person at the table. By the way my son was teaching there with me. Awkward silence. The person to my right whispered "Sir, you are the oldest person at the table, you must begin first." Ah, it's the white hair and white beard. I took something from the lazy susan and eating commenced.

In Israel three years ago the government passed the "over 80" law. It means if you are over 80 you don't have to stand in line for anything. For example, my grandson took me on a flight to England. You know what it's like at any airport. When we arrived at Ben Gurion Airport, all my grandson had to say was "My grandfather is over 80." I was ushered through security, baggage check and passport controlling in record time. I kiddingly said that I should stand outside the airport with a sign around my neck saying, "I am over 80. Hire me to go through the maze." It's true for every line. In addition, all mass transportation, which is quite good, is half price for anyone over 65. On the light rail, busses, or trains, seats are made available for the elderly. Sometimes it's a bit embarrassing when a middle-aged lady offers me a seat. Last year I tripped and fell twice. In both cases, within seconds I was picked up by two young men. I was wearing shorts, I scraped my knee, out came the tissues and questions about feeling. I have observed the same care a number of times. Concern for the elderly is a cultural norm. Perhaps it's an extension of the commandment to "honor your father and mother."

Thank you for letting me share all of this. Please forward it to others who are interested