

Title:

Israel - The Pressures of Life

Word Count:

844

Summary:

When people in Israel get together for the first time one of the first things they ask each other the origins of their family. It's quite common that someone will have, for instance, an Iraqi father and a Bulgarian mother. Traditions mingle and a new race is born.

Keywords:

israel hotels

Article Body:

It's a trait that makes this present generation of Israelis one of the best-looking on the planet. Asian features combine with European physiques and produce tall, strong young guys and women who turn a hundred heads every time they walk down the street.

But what's more noteworthy is the melting-pot of traditions that this marriage of ethnic backgrounds represents. Although technically all of the same ancestral descent, the lives of Jews scraping a few carrots from the frozen soil of Poland were hugely different to those seeking a living in the crowded markets of Baghdad.

Every family brought with it the language of their country in which they'd been living along with the cuisine, traditions and attitudes of the place too. Israelis of Polish descent have the reputation to be deeply materialistic while those from North Africa are said to share the unpredictable nature and bigheartedness of their Arabic hosts.

After more than fifty years since the birth of the state, many of these differences have subsided in the search for a national identity. The younger generation have little time for the past suspicions that existed between Jews of European and Arabic descent and prefer to think of themselves to be Israeli before anything else.

But what is an Israeli?

In the beginning everyone had their own thought of what it should be. The

religious saw the return of the Chosen People to their homeland as a prophesy fulfilled and hoped that the synagogues might soon be filled with religious Jews. Others simply saw Israel as a place to escape discrimination and intended to carry on with their lives as before but this time in more thriving conditions. The same can be said for the 1 million Russian immigrants who swelled the population by 20%.

But if what John Lennon said is true then 'Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans' and perhaps we are as much shaped by our environment as by our own choices. And it seems to me that this is the case with the Israelis who spend most of their lives trying to fight for their right to exist. But their day to day struggles are not with the Arabs or Palestinians but rather with each other. And this is the first indication in understanding their national identity.

In lieu of an anti-semitic population to make their lives hell, the Israelis seem to intent on making life as taxing for each other as they possibly can. Whether in business, family or friendship, Israelis flourish upon stress and forever push for an extra inch. It's almost as though it were some kind of national decision to keep everyone in fighting fitness.

The typical image of the Jewish mother is more than just a myth and the whole family will wield every last ounce of emotional blackmail to urge their children onto success. Countless times I've seen some smooth young guy in jeans, t-shirt and shades, hanging out on a street corner looking cool until he answers his mobile phone - his brow furrows, his eyes raise to the sky and within twenty seconds of listening to the rant of complaints from the other end of the line he raises one hand to the sky and shouts:

"Mother!" Of course the fussing only comes from a loving heart but it's part of an Israelis education that if he wants to be heard he must yell. And not just in the home - an Israeli friend of mine described to me her first day at school when she moved to Israel as a child.

"There were thirty of us in the classroom and we were all very eager about our first day. The teacher came in and put twenty-five biscuits on the table. Then he invited us all to come and take one. Me and a few other kids didn't push hard enough to reach the table in time and had to watch all the others enjoy their biscuits.

"'You see?' the teacher told us, 'If you don't fight for what you want in this life then you'll end up with zero!'"

These lessons extend to the workplace and business. Israeli employers haven't

quite grasped the notion that workers deserve to be paid for the time that they've worked. One friend of mine waited two months to be paid for a weekend that she spent as a waitress in a cafe.

"Every time I called my boss he gave me some reason or pretended that the battery on his phone was dead. Finally I just walked into his office with a hammer in my hand.

'Either you pay me now,' I told him, 'Or I'm gong to smash every window in this place!'

He gave me this very disillusioned look and told me that he'd have to pay me out of his own pocket - like I could care less! But I got my money."

So this is possibly the first part of understanding the people : Israelis are people who fight for what is theirs. And boy, do they know how to fight.