

A Monument To The Jews Executed In Zarasay



This is a monument to the Jewish people, who perished in Zarasay, erected at the Jewish cemetery in Tel Aviv. I was in Israel in 1998 and took this photo.

Until I visited Israel in 1990 I had no correct idea about it. Our propaganda gave us a one-side illustration of the state. When I visited the country and saw with my own eyes what kind of a state it was, my opinion changed significantly. My cousins, Moisey and Itskhak, invited me and I went to

visit them. I have seen a lot thanks to them. We visited a lot of places; I have seen Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. I visited a city where Muslims, Circassians live and I also saw Bedouins' settlements. Those who practice Islam have all the rights of Israeli citizens and live in good conditions. They serve in the Israeli Army and protect the interests of the state. There is no antagonism with the population of Israel. Circassians and Bedouins have no antagonism with the Jews either. Quite the contrary, Bedouins express antagonism towards the Palestinians, since they do not agree with many of their actions and their way of living. Bedouins are cattle-breeders, a very hard-working nation. Seemingly both Jews and Arabs are Semites. There is no 'biological' racial foundation for hostility. Their relations are an issue of upbringing.

I remained a secular person; however, I take an interest in Jewish history. I have a connection with the Moscow Institute of Judaism; I receive literature from them and correspond with them. I am very much interested in the history of the Jewish nation as well as in the history of the Torah. So I study the history and celebrate holidays. I love the merry spring holiday of Pesach, the celebration of the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah. We do not arrange any special celebrations at home, but we have been attending the synagogue on these holidays for the last several years.

I think this is very important for preserving national traditions and the image of our nation. It is an important matter, owing to which the nation is intact. We celebrate holidays at home – maybe, we don't observe all the rules strictly, but still – and we eat matzah. It has always been like that, especially when we meet our relatives and my cousin. When Hesed was established, we started to receive Jewish calendars with holiday dates. We like it very much, because it keeps one disciplined and reminds one when and what to do.