

FULL-TIME JEWS

The sidra contains a phrase that occurs often in the Torah, "When you come into the land of Canaan..."

Entry into the Promised Land was the dream of every Israelite in the wilderness. Return to Israel was the dream of countless generations living in the centuries of exile.

Could a person not be a Jew in other countries? Obviously yes, and the worst persecution did not break down Jewish identity and pride.

Today, when there is an Israel and it is not difficult to get there, is it also not possible to live as a Jew in the Diaspora? The answer is again yes.

Why then have so many made Aliyah out of sheer idealism, and why do we so greatly encourage people, especially the young, to find their future in Israel?

Not only because it is an exciting land, throbbing with remarkable energy and liveliness. But because there you are freed from much of the ambiguity of being a Jew in other lands.

In Israel you can be a full-time Jew and not restrict your Jewishness to certain days and places, even those as great and inspiring as Pesach night around the Seder table.

The test of Yom Kippur is whether a Jew comes to shule the day after. The test of Seder is whether a Jew keeps Shabbat the week after. In the Diaspora some pass the test; others leave their Judaism behind until the next passing nod.

In Israel you can be a full-time Jew without self-consciousness or ambivalence.

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