

# Discussion Guide

## I Came to Palestine



A film by Robert Krieg



### Director's statement (1998)

Almost fifty years after unsuccessful attempts to establish a state, after five lost wars and decades of displacement, self-delusion, humiliation and hatred, Palestinians are now seeing the founding of their own state come within reach for the first time. Fighting for and suffering with them during all these years was a small minority of the Israeli population who - although they never managed to grow into a large movement - left nothing undone to bring about a reconciliation between Jews and Arabs. We are talking about the handful of elderly Jewish men and women who have been fighting for the Palestinians' right to self-determination, some of them for more than half a century.

Once young pioneers dedicated to the Zionist ideal of founding a Jewish state, most of them had emigrated from Eastern European countries and Germany in the 20s and 30s and settled in what was then the British Mandate of Palestine. For a greater part of these immigrants the notion that national self-fulfillment would lead out of a history of anti-Semitic discrimination and deprivation harmonized with concepts of utopian socialism: living off the fruits of one's own labour on one's own soil in a just and brotherly society.

But their humanistic convictions brought some of them into conflict with Zionist policies. They could not accept that the existence of the Arab part of the population of Palestine was being ignored and that Arabs were being driven from their soil. They met with a lack of understanding and open animosity for persistently warning others about the consequences of a forcible marginalization of the Arab population. The remembrances of these people open the book of history to a page without which it would be difficult to fully understand what has compelled Israel to finally decide to make peace with its Arab neighbors. They have been the catalysts who - in diverse forms, in parliamentary and extraparlimentary movements - have kept the idea of peaceful coexistence alive in the consciousness of the Israeli public. To let them tell their life stories would be to trace the historic events that have led up to the Middle East peace negotiations.

For the early pioneers of peace who we want to introduce in our film, hopes for a peace go hand in hand with the utopia of a just society. Looking back on their lives and their personal commitment, we asked them what life in Israel will be like in the era of peace and whether the Jewish values of humane and just egalitarianism will continue to be valid in the future Israeli society.

By way of montage, the narratives are interwoven. A series of individual destinies became the common experience of a generation. The women among our contemporary witnesses, for instance, were influenced by the pioneering spirit of the 20s and 30s, which allowed women a much more active role in society. By applying Fechner's montage principle, we were seating my "protagonists together at an imaginary table, irrespective of time and space, by virtue of their alternating discourse on the topic. By means of this fictive dialogue, statements can gain additional force as they are complemented, explained or elaborated by others, or conflicting positions can gain contour as different opinions are juxtaposed." (Egon Netenjakob on Eberhard Fechner's montage)

There were situations in the lives of our contemporary witnesses that they all experienced in a similar way and that molded them. These decisive experiences of existential significance constitute markers and turning points in the individual life stories and the general course of history. Using historical and new material, we want to document these breaking points and expose the images to the field of tension generated by descriptions from memory.

"Memory is not truth; after all memory changes continuously. It is not what has happened but what I imagine or want to have happened" (Eberhard Fechner). By letting our witnesses tell their version of the history of Palestine and Israel, we want to depict reality as it was experienced by them subjectively. From the sum of subjectively experienced realities emerges the search for truth, the attempt to come one notch closer to reality.



### National Film Network

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**Audience**

Students of high school and university interested in the history of the state Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

**Courses**

- History
- Political Science
- Middle-East-Studies
- Judaism

**Note..**

**Instructions/Advice**

Students should have general instructions about the history of state-building/state of Israel, Zionism.

The teacher should inform about different motivations/reasons for immigration of Jews to Palestine: inspiration of Zionism and Socialism in the beginning of the 20th century up to the 20th, up from the 30th mainly persecution/antisemitism in Eastern Europe and Nazi-terror in Germany.

**Age/Grade** Students of high school and university up from 16 years

**IMPORTANT FEATURES**

**Cautionary Remarks**

Students should be informed about German as a common cultural language of the educated classes all over Eastern Europe before World War II (all protagonists of the film, even with origin Czech or Polish, speak German, sometimes influenced by Jiddish)

**vocabulary**

- Microwave radiation
- Electro-smog
- Electromagnetic spectrum
- Thermal vs. non-thermal biological effects of microwave exposure

**Understanding**

- British policy as mandate-holders in Palestine 1918-1948
- UN plan/decision of division of Palestine into an Israeli and a Palestinian state 1947
- Independent war of Israel 1948
- The wars 1956 (British and French interests in the Middle-East, 1967)
- 6-Days-War, turning point of Israeli policy, 1973
- Yom-Kippur-War, policy with Syria and Egypt, 1981
- Libanon-War
- Kibbuz-Movement in Israel
- Israeli policy of settlements
- Massiv immigration of Jews from the Arabic countries in the 50th

**Activities**

Contact members/groups of the Israeli and Palestinian communities to find out their different points of view in respect to the reasons of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and possibilities of peace

Internet-research

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