

Etta Ferdmann



That's me during my trip to Israel. The picture was taken in the green house of a kibbutz in 1998.

My cousin Gita and her family left for Israel in March 1990. I visited them in summer 1990. Gita sent me the invitation and I went to Moscow to process the permit. The Soviet regime was still in power, though perestroika had started already. It was so complicated! I had to go to Moscow, to the Israeli embassy. There were problems with the tickets; I had to stand in line all night long to exchange money. It was terrible. My other two visits were after the breakup of the Soviet Union. It was so simple then. I did not even need a visa. I bought the tickets and left.

Israel is a beautiful country, where every stone and every tree is breathing with history. It is a wonderful country, but I did not want to stay there. There are a lot of things there that are strange and unclear to me. Jews are very fussy. There is such a din.... They call it historic motherland. I do not understand this, frankly speaking. I still think that even if my parents were still alive, we would stay here anyway. Our roots are here. It is nice to go there for a visit, but not to live permanently in Israel, or Canada, where our relatives live. The generations of my parents lived in Narva, Estonia, and this country is my motherland. I am comfortable here.

Then, there is another factor my ancestors' graves are here. Almost all my kin is buried in Tallinn Jewish cemetery Paxumer. I am taking care of their graves and I find it sacred. There is also a burial place for me, with my name written on it. It keeps me here. Relatives should not be forgotten, but remembered and respected. Of course, I always trace the events in Israel, watch the news, often call my relatives there. I am worried for my country, for my relatives. They are happy there and I am glad.