

A MESSAGE FROM — OUR PRESIDENT —

JEFFREY E. LEVINE

JNF IS COMMITTED TO THE ENVIRONMENT

More than 3,000 years have passed since the ancient Hebrews settled in the Promised Land and had to find ways to adapt to living in some of the harshest desert conditions in the world. Much has changed from that time as our people have now mastered water reuse and learned to grow crops in the arid climate there. Today, Israel shares her technology with the rest of the world and has built partnerships with states across the United States and countries including Rwanda, Cambodia, Canada and Vietnam, where needs are as diverse as transforming formerly dry environments into agricultural food centers, producing solar energy power as an alternative to expensive and polluting fossil-fuels, and bringing life-saving water to communities.



To better prepare for the future, last year California Governor Jerry Brown and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met in Mountain View, California and agreed to “boost economic, cultural and academic cooperation between California and Israel, with an emphasis on water conservation, alternative energy, cybersecurity, health and biotechnology, education and agricultural technology.”

Israel’s smart, sustainable water solutions make the most of living off a land where little rain falls. I am proud to say that much of the science that has reshaped the former wilderness has been at the hand of JNF and its partners around the world. Indeed, our work in, and commitment to, the environment is why we chose to make it the theme of this *B’Yachad*.

I often remark that “a single drop of water is too precious a commodity to use only once.” JNF has been at the forefront of water management and conservation in Israel, increasing the country’s total water supply by 12% and helping Israel become a world leader in water recycling and reuse. Nearly 80% of the recycled sewage water in Israel is reused, the highest amount in the world. Spain comes in at a distant second at 17%, and the United States figures are well under 10%. JNF’s network of more than 250 recycled water reservoirs provide almost half of the water used for agriculture, saving enough freshwater to meet the drinking needs of 8.2 million Israelis a year.

Today, with the growing threat of rising temperatures, chronic drought and the lack of plentiful water supply for much of the world, the picture is rather daunting. Eighty countries have water issues that threaten health, food production, and economic well-being, while more than 2 billion people have no access to clean drinking water. Population growth of some 80 million people each year further depletes ground and surface water supplies. In Texas, where severe drought has crippled parts of the state, the population is expected to double in the next 50 years with a projected increase in demand for water rising by 22%, while its groundwater supplies are expected to fall by 30%.

JNF and Israel have become synonymous with successful initiatives that address water quality, trans-boundary challenges, recycling, and developing alternative water sources, by using drip irrigation, conservation education, desalination, and stream and aquifer restoration. By sharing its technology and research with other nations, Israel is instrumental in making the world a better place for generations to come. One of our donors is doing just that: This fall, St. Martin’s Press will release Seth Siegel’s book “Let There be Water—Israel’s Solution for a Water-Starved World” that features JNF prominently.

You can always reach me at jlevine@jnf.org.