



LIVING (THE CHAREIDI LIFE)

in the LAND

by Sharon N. Galkin

For some time, I have been a subscriber to an email group called “*Avira d’Eretz Yisroel*” (loosely translated as “the holy atmosphere of the Land of Israel”).

There, and on his website, www.aviraderetzisroel.org, Yoel Berman promotes successful “*chareidi*” *aliyah* from North America by educating and informing his readership about communities, old and new, that are appropriate for American *bonei Torah* and their families – a goal that he shows to be practical, attainable, and worth striving for. If you’re a regular reader of the *Where What When*, you’ve probably seen some of his articles featured in these pages.

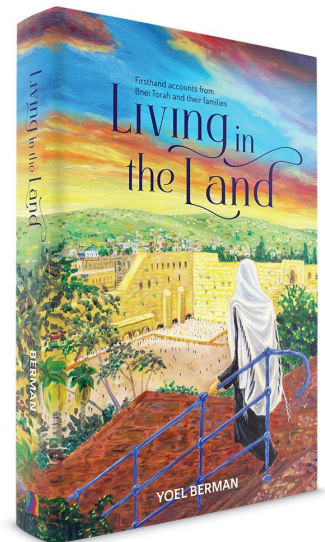
Now, Reb Yoel, who himself made *aliyah* from Los Angeles, has published a book, *Living in the Land*. The book gives you all that education and information – then ices the cake with the inspiration and empowerment to take the plunge. The beautiful cover (painted by

Yehoshua Wiseman) immediately sends a subliminal message about the colorful spectrum of Israel’s Jewish population. Yet, statistics show that *aliyah* from the “black hat” demographic of Anglo Jewry – and from the United States in particular – is underwhelming. This book aims to turn the tide.

Personally, I am hyper-sensitive to the slightest whiff of if-I-made-*aliyah*-you-can/should-too. No one knows enough about what’s going on in another person’s life to tell them where they should be when. While the book does contain a bit of that attitude, its overriding objective is to whet the reader’s appetite to live in the Land and to help them follow through.

To that end, Reb Yoel introduces us to 50 *chareidi* families who pursued their dream (or didn’t even know they were dreaming until their dream came true!) and are now blossoming and growing on holy soil. To read their stories is to celebrate their accomplishments even if, for now, we are only living vicariously through them. For those who are not yet dreamers, these stories might

inspire them to dream. For those who have been dreaming, these stories might inspire them to act. And for those who are already in the process, these stories will surely give them that extra shot in the arm to keep their eyes on the prize and fight the forces that are bound to try to hold them back. Even those who are already settled and perhaps starting to take their *aliyah* for granted would do



well to read this book and renew their appreciation of the brave, life-changing decision that they have made.

The author divides his storytellers by their location. Appropriately, the first chapter is “The City of Yerushalayim.” But Yerushalayim is not for everyone’s budget or lifestyle, so Reb Yoel brings us to communities “A Short Ride Away” from the holy city. One stop along the tour is the *yishuv* (settlement) of Maale Amos, from where former Baltimorean Shoshana Weinberg shares her *aliyah* story. Then we read about the rest of “A Very Beautiful Country,” in which section I was pleased to see my children’s new hometown of Afula well represented.

Regardless of where in Israel one is heading, *aliyah* is never “easy,” whether logistically, financially, physically, emotionally, or socially – and sometimes all of the above. But as we know, it is not meant to be easy. Our sages from time immemorial have told us that one “acquires” the Land through the trials and tribulations of the effort invested. Those who undertake that effort pray

that where there is the will, Hashem will provide the way. More often than not, His kind, compassionate, helping hand is apparent, as we see in so many of these stories.

But this book is not just “storytime with Reb Yoel and friends.” The final section describes and provides contact information for numerous organizations to help plan and execute a successful *chareidi aliyah*. These essential resources and the opportunities they offer did not exist when we moved to Israel in 1997. I can’t help but wonder where we would be now if they had been available to us then.

One of my favorite vignettes in the book was written by a Breslover chasid. He explains that “There is an important teaching of Rebbe Nachman (of Breslov) to keep in mind: The *middah* (character trait) of *arichus apayim* (patience) is a prerequisite for being *zocheh* to (merit) Eretz Yisrael.... Be excited, but don’t jump into things; you must have *bitachon* (trust, based on faith) but be careful and calculated.”

Those (and many other) wise words

of advice in this work might ring true anywhere on the planet. But the rewards for those who heed them in order to find their place in Eretz Yisrael are astronomically greater than outside Israel. *Living in the Land* is a glimpse into exactly that, and it’s worth every minute of the read.

In his preface, Reb Yoel asks that “if you would like to share your own thoughts and experiences for a future volume...please email me....” May we all merit to be featured in future volumes of *Living in the Land* – until there is no Jew left in *chutz la’Aretz* (outside the Land) to need the inspiration and information therein. ♦

Living in the Land can be found in bookstores in Israel and the U.S. or ordered online at mosaicapress.com/product/living-in-the-land/. This review first appeared on Remember Jerusalem (www.rememberjerusalem.blogspot.com). If you would like to be subscribed to rememberjerusalem, please email sharongalkin@gmail.com.