



# ERETZ CHEMDAH: *An Inside View*

VOLUME I • NISAN 5780

**Perspectives &  
Experiences of**

— and Tips

from —

**Frum English Speakers  
Living in Eretz Yisroel**

compiled by **Yoel Berman**

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a project of  
Avira D'Eretz Yisroel

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Perspectives and Experiences of  
—and Tips from—  
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If you have what to share of your own thoughts and experiences for a future volume, or otherwise any comments on this booklet or its contents, please email [yberman613@gmail.com](mailto:yberman613@gmail.com).

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Yoel Berman  
Yerushalayim, Nisan 5780



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## INTRODUCTION

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Throughout the generations, Jews have longed to live in Eretz Yisroel. Those who were able to afford the voyage and withstand the difficulties involved in the arduous and often dangerous journey considered themselves quite fortunate. Once they got here, they didn't have life easy. Though, such a life without complications was not their primary focus.

For some, the *mitzvah* or *ma'alah* of living in HaShem's Land was an end in itself. For others, it was the opportunity to service Him at a higher level that brought them to live in Eretz Yisroel. There was the attraction to the special *mitzvos* that pertain only to this Land and in this Land. There was the emotional connection that Jews had to this Land, as they would pray to HaShem several times a day in all their *tefillos* that He would rebuild the Land and restore His Glory within.

The common denominator between all the reasons for which people would hope to establish themselves in Eretz Yisroel is that they are catalysts for personal growth or *mitzvah* fulfillment. While these reasons certainly still exist, today there is an added dimension.

With multitudes of Jews who *b'chessed HaShem yisborach* have ingathered here from all corners of the earth, a full society is continually being shaped, complete with all the elements necessary to support a fully functional and self-sufficient nation. This nation's primary mission—as was fulfilled in days bygone—is to serve HaShem and have His Presence dwell among them in His Land “as a nation.” The centrality of *shomrei Torah umitzvos*, active in all trades and professions—whether directly Torah-related or more worldly—to such a Divine plan, is unquestionable.

The *frum* immigrant of today serves not only him or herself but is also a building-block in the reconstitution of Am Yisroel in Eretz



Yisroel, on the path to *hashra'as haShechinah*. The dedication to *kiyum Torah umitzvos* in HaShem's Land as *yechidim* and together as a *tzibbur* will *b'ezras HaShem* bring us closer to our final destiny in the Geulah Sheleimah, *bekarov!*

The vast opportunities that exist here for the *frum* immigrant of today—including for those from western lands like America and Europe—in every aspect of *yishuv Eretz Yisroel*, are exponentially greater than what existed in the past, and these possibilities are constantly growing. These possibilities include opportunities that would enable one to settle here, such as *parnassah*, suitable *chinuch*, and community options. Additionally, there are opportunities to be personally involved with the building up of Eretz Yisroel, such as in the realm of *chinuch*, community building, *chessed* projects, and many others.

To give us a glimpse of those different opportunities as well as of what might have inspired people to actually make the move here, we have compiled a collection of thoughts and personal experiences from *frum* Jews (who originated from English-speaking countries) who were fortunate enough to establish themselves here in Eretz Yisroel. Some of these immigrants have included tips and advice in areas that they feel will make the adjustment easier for the newcomer, many from their own first-hand experiences. We hope that these accounts from regular people—just like me and you—who have made Eretz Yisroel their home, will be both informative and inspiring!

## RETZON HASHEM

Yekusiel A., Beitar Illit

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I came to learn in Eretz Yisroel after three years in *beis medrash* (post high school). I grew up in Lakewood, New Jersey, and, like most of my friends, when I came to learn in Eretz Yisroel I had no long-term intentions. I came to do the two-year Eretz Yisroel experience. Like most *bochurim*, this obviously included Shabbos *seudos* at the homes of many different types of people.

At one of those Shabbos meals, the question was posed: “How can people live in *chutz laAretz* if there is a *mitzvah* to live in Eretz Yisroel?”

I was put on the spot, because honestly, I had never thought of it. I was indeed aware there is a *mitzvah* according to the majority of opinions, but somehow that all was theoretical knowledge. I totally ignored the step of applying my knowledge to my actions—I just honestly never thought about it.

After that Shabbos *seudah*, I decided to research the topic a little bit, until I discovered that Reb Moshe Feinstein, *zt”l*, wrote a *teshuvah* that there is no obligation to live in Eretz Yisroel, rather it is a *mitzvah kiyumis*—a *mitzvah* that one gets *s’char* for doing—but is not an absolute *chiyuv* to do.

I was happy. As far as I was concerned the “issue” was resolved. There is a legitimate opinion that there is no *chiyuv* to live in Eretz Yisroel, therefore I could live happily ever after in Lakewood. Case closed.

Sometime after that I had a conversation about this with a *talmid chacham* I knew. He told me something that changed my life. He asked me if, as a Yid, I saw *mitzvos* as a burden, or am I happy to be part of the Am HaNivchar (Chosen Nation) excited to do *retzon HaShem* even if it isn’t the easiest thing. Without too much thought,

I knew that the answer was the latter—a Yid has to be happy with his *mitzvos* and not look at it as if it is a burden.

He told me, even if we accept Reb Moshe’s view (which I understood not to be the *pashtus*), why does that give you the security to live in *chutz laAretz*? You have a *mitzvah* that is definitely *retzon HaShem* to live in Eretz Yisroel, so even if it is not a *chiyuv*, shouldn’t you want to try to do it? He added, you don’t think it is easy? Many *mitzvos* aren’t easy and that just increases the *s’char*, as the *mishnah* in Avos says, “*l’fum tza’ara agra.*”

This *talmid chacham* continued to note that there are many *ma’alos* of living in Eretz Yisroel mentioned throughout the Torah and Chazal such as, “*Eretz asher Einei HaShem...*” meaning, HaShem’s special *hashgachah pratis* in this Land. He also mentioned the famous *gemara* (Kesuvos 110b) that states the difference, concerning a person’s relationship with HaShem, between one who is living in Eretz Yisroel and one who is living in *chutz laAretz*. I once again was aware of these *ma’alos*, but somehow, I never thought about trying to apply them to my life. He asked me to forget about if it is a *chiyuv* or not, am I not interested in all these *ma’alos*?

I thought about this for a while and took it to heart. The reason a Yid is in this world is to do *retzon HaShem*, not to look for loopholes in it. The *retzon HaShem* in this case is very clear—HaShem wants Yidden to live in Eretz Yisroel.

I was just a *bochur* at the time, but when I started *shidduchim* my condition was clear. I went back to the States for *shidduchim* like the norm, but I knew that for the long term, I needed to live in Eretz Yisroel. My parents thought I wasn’t being rational, but they agreed I can “try” my condition for a year, and to rethink it if I still don’t find my *bashert* by then. A year passed and I started getting nervous, but then HaShem sent me my *bashert*, and B”H she agreed with my condition eagerly.

We got married B”H and started off in Yerushalayim, which was the normal place *chutznikim* my age lived. I continued learning in the same *yeshivah* I did as a *bochur*. My wife B”H found work for an American company through the computer. Neither my parents or my in-laws were financially supporting our stay in Eretz Yisroel, but we had *siyatta diShmaya* and my wife had decent work. After a little less than a year, however, we realized that we barely could afford our budget, and this was without the added expenses that come with children. It was a hard but obvious decision: We knew we had to move out of the mainstream Yerushalayim to somewhere where the expenses were much cheaper.

After looking at the various options and spending a Shabbos here and there, we moved to the community we thought made the most sense.

B”H we are very happy, and I thank HaShem daily for letting me live my dream in Eretz Yisroel, as the *gemara* says, “*duchta de-Moshe v’Aharon lo zachu lah...*” a place where even Moshe and Aharon did not merit....




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### Adjusting

*For me, adjusting to our new community outside Yerushalayim wasn't such a big deal. I continued learning in the same yeshivah in Yerushalayim, taking a bus every day.*

*For my wife it was more challenging. We moved from a mostly English-speaking community, to a building where almost nobody knew English. It took time, but eventually she got connected to the English-speaking community there and also learned to make friends with our Israeli neighbors.*

*The chutznik community gave us a lot of chizuk. It wasn't a group of people of which most were moving back after 2-3 years. It was an oylam of people doing the same thing we were doing.*

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## FROM LAKEWOOD TO BEIT SHEMESH

Tzvi Moshe Arnstein, Ramat Beit Shemesh Gimmel

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We came to Eretz Yisroel in the summer of 2014 after living in Lakewood for almost seven years. Being “in-towners” originally from Monsey and Flatbush, moving to Eretz Yisroel wasn’t really the “in” thing to do, so why did we?

We always had a soft spot for Eretz Yisroel, but, like most people, we didn’t think it was realistic for us to live here long-term, so we settled in Lakewood, New Jersey like everyone else. After being inspired by a friend, I started to research the significance of living in Eretz Yisroel and how it has recently become exponentially more practical. At some point it dawned on me that Eretz Yisroel today is actually a most-amazing opportunity presented by HaShem, and I wanted to be a part of this project that was bringing us to Klal Yisroel’s ultimate destiny.

Before we immigrated to Eretz Yisroel, we went to get a *brachah* from Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky, *shlita*. He clearly stressed the importance of making sure that my wife would be happy there. It also seemed very important to him that we had a plan for *parnassah*, which we were indeed confident about. At that time, I was working for a tech company that would let me take my job with me, so we didn’t have any excuse not to go. Working American hours in Eretz Yisroel meant that the mornings would be utilized for learning (what a better way to start a day), shopping and other errands, and this is something that many others are doing in our community in Eretz Yisroel.

Although my family would miss us, they respected the idea and were very supportive. My wife had two brothers already living in Eretz Yisroel, which made it much easier. WhatsApp and Skype

can't replace the real thing, so our parents now come visit about once a year, and we go once every few years for the summer.

We settled in Ramat Beit Shemesh, which has many nice American *yeshivah*-style communities like where we came from. There are tens of shuls which range from *yeshivish* to *balebatish* to *heimish*. Some are into integrating with Israelis, while others work to create an entirely American environment. We have found American immigrants who have been successful coming with children of all ages, but they generally live in the more American neighborhoods that seem more appropriate for such a move. It is of course easier to integrate when the kids are younger.

Most people in my community are those who have stayed on for long-term after coming to Eretz Yisroel for *yeshivah*, and mostly originated in out-of-town communities; though I do know other people, besides myself, who have come here directly from in-town places like Lakewood and Monsey.

As our oldest child was turning six when we came here, *chinuch* was already at the forefront of our minds. People had warned us that things are different in Eretz Yisroel and there aren't any schools that have the variety and balance that you'll find in the U.S. When doing our research, a very different picture emerged, and when we arrived, we were glad to see that our fears about *chinuch* were unfounded. B"H, there are many schools that cater to Americans like us, some geared to *kollel* families, others with a working parent body, and then some more that are in between. In general, the schools with higher percentages of Americans seem to be more *balebatish*, and the ones more *kollel*-oriented seem to have a higher percentage of Israelis, though there are exceptions.

I think that we *frum* Yidden coming from America have what to contribute to society in Eretz Yisroel. For one, many of us bring a can-do attitude—we won't just take situations as a given but will try to improve them. Another is the fact that we are proud and content to

be hard-working and self-supporting *ehrlicher* Yidden. For us, after five or ten years of learning, this is just a new and different phase of our *avodas HaShem*—not a failure. Of course, there is much for us Americans to learn as well from the surrounding Israeli Chareidi society, including a much-less focus on materialism.

Living here has brought our lives to a different plane of existence, which has manifested in several different aspects. One thing that really stands out is the diversity. Even though in any specific neighborhood there might be just one kind of group, it takes only a three-minute drive to reach any public area—shopping, leisure, etc.—and all the walls fall apart and all types of Jews are interacting and getting along. It's beautiful to see so many different colors and flavors of Yidden living side by side in harmony.





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### ***Our Very Own “Mountains”***

*Like in the U.S., we have our very own “upstate”—except that it’s Tzefas and Meron. The actual mountains seem to always be singing. Looking for Miami? No need to fly. Within a car ride of just an hour or so you can be taking in the sun-washed shores of Netanya. Of course, the greatest of them all is being able to type “The Kotel” or “Kever Rachel” into Waze and it tells me “you are forty-five minutes away.”*

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## NOT JUST A SPECTATOR

Yedidyah B., Yerushalayim

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B”H, I am happily raising my family in Yerushalayim, making a living running a business I started, and learning Torah as well. Honestly, though, all of this is not something I take for granted.

I grew up in a regular American *yeshivish* home in a *frum* community in New Jersey. I am fortunate to have ended up living in Eretz Yisroel, but from a class of fifteen kids in *cheider*, I’m the only one so far. One of the kids in my class unfortunately ended up marrying a *shiksa*, R”l. I am very troubled by the thought that the same percentage of the American *chinuch* system’s complete failures—at least concerning my class—is also the same percentage of those who have succeeded in coming to live in Eretz Yisroel. I am still contemplating why this is so.

Anyone who has gone through the *chinuch* system has been exposed to Torah, Shas and *poskim*. Therefore, the centrality of Eretz Yisroel must surely be so very clear to them. How can they not want to live in Eretz Yisroel? People are busy with *chumros* in all sorts of things, so why is living in Eretz Yisroel left out—even if it might not be an absolute *chovah*?

I came to Eretz Yisroel in 2003 at the age of nineteen. I liked the *yeshivos* in America, but the love of Eretz Yisroel brought me here. I started out in a small *yeshivah* in Yerushalayim catering to American *bochurim*. I quickly realized that if I really wanted to stay in Eretz Yisroel, it would be best to integrate into the Israeli Chareidi system and culture, so I decided to make the jump into an Israeli *yeshivah*.

I attended the famous Ponevezh Yeshivah in Bnei Brak for a year and a half. When I first arrived there, I only knew some basic “*sid-dur*” Hebrew, and I had to pick up the language quickly; basically overnight. It was the best *ulpan* [school for learning the Hebrew lan-

guage] and *merkaz klitah* (absorption center) into the Israeli Chareidi world. I had the most amazing time of my life in Bnei Brak, with exposure to the rich Torah center and its special personalities.

Now living in Yerushalayim, I am part and parcel of the Israeli Chareidi community with all of its pros and cons. (Of course, what constitutes a pro or a con is a matter of personal opinion and a question of priorities.) For example, I would be happy if my kids knew a bit more math, but we made a decision that it is more important to be part of the Chareidi community and not feel different. My kids are well integrated, so much so that they don't feel like "American" kids at all. Proof is, my daughter did not elect to be placed with the *dovrot* [English speakers] group.

Here in Eretz Yisroel the Torah becomes alive. When discussing the Me'aras HaMachpelah from the weekly *parashah*, it isn't something we just read about—we were actually in Chevron recently, looking at what was the *sadeh* that Avrohom Avinu bought. For us in Yerushalayim, the absence of a sheep for the *korban Pesach* is glaring. The Beis HaMikdash is a real concept, waiting to be rebuilt on the Har HaBayis behind the Kosel HaMa'aravi.

There was a time in recent history when Eretz Yisroel needed Yidden to come here to make it happen. Today we are at a point where much has already been built up here, both physically and in a Torah sense. The center of the Torah world—including prestigious *yeshivos*, respected and widely recognized *batei din*, *rabbonim* of world-renowned stature—is now here in Eretz Yisroel. Despite that, Eretz Yisroel still needs you; the more *frum* Americans living here, the greater our influence would be on what's happening here. Realize on one hand that there is great opportunity here, and on the other hand, it's you, your children and family who are missing out by not being here. It's your choice to jump on the train and be a part of history in-the-making, or just to watch it as an outside spectator. As my

ninth-grade *rebbe* would say, “You can make a cow thirsty and bring it to the freshwater lake, but you cannot make it drink.”

I have come across many older people visiting here—some who come as often as three times a year, many who even own apartments here. I often hear them saying how they would love to retire here and how lucky I am to live here. The reason many of them are not staying to live here is because they have children and grandchildren settled back in the U.S. If the *chinuch* for the value of living in Eretz Yisroel doesn’t have a big enough impact on the younger generation, they won’t make the move. Not only will they miss out, but the older generation might just find themselves stuck there in America, dreams unfulfilled.

On a practical note for those who do want to come, I recommend first finding a suitable community to be a part of, carefully considering the pros and cons (especially including the school system) you are willing to deal with. This doesn’t mean you have to give up your identity. Contrary to popular belief, there is a tremendous amount of diversity within the *frum* world here. Just stick to your community’s guidelines though, and don’t count on changing the system. For the kids, it’s especially important that they not remain outsiders.




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### ***So Many Goyim!***

*My father is descended from the Zoref-Salomon family who were very involved in yishuv Eretz Yisroel. Our ancestor R' Shlomo Zalman Zoref was instrumental in getting permission for Ashkenazi Jews to live in Yerushalayim almost two hundred years ago. To his signature on a document now on display in the Churva shul's lobby, he appended "ish Yerushalayim" (man of Yerushalayim).*

*The connection to Eretz Yisroel must be in our genes. On a recent trip to America, I was sure my ten-year-old daughter would have a good time. But it didn't take long for her to want to go back home, as, in her words, "It's freezing here and there are so many goyim!"*

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## PRESENT AND FUTURE

Yoel Berman, Yerushalayim

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I came from Los Angeles as a *bochur* to the Mir Yeshivah, and then got married here in Eretz Yisroel.

I continued learning in the Mir, while my wife worked for Otzar HaChochma, the world's largest digital *seforim* library, in its beginning stages of amassing and scanning thousands of *seforim*.

We then moved to Modi'in Illit, where, with the help of our parents for the down payment, we purchased our first apartment. As is common in this country, we bought "on paper," paying the contractor in installments as the apartment was built. Meanwhile, we rented down the block. It was an interesting experience watching the progress of the construction of our apartment.

My wife then worked at ImageStore doing document digitizing and electronic archiving. It was one of a few companies which started the trend of creating workspaces tailored for large numbers of Chareidi women interested in working together, close to home in a sheltered environment. Next door to ImageStore was another such company, Citybook, which provided jobs to many native English speakers living in Modi'in Illit by outsourcing for American companies.

While my wife worked, I continued as an *avreich* in a small *kollel* in Kiryat Sefer where we would hear *shiurim* from HaRav Moshe Mordechai Karp, *shlita* (author of the popular *Hilchos Chag BeChag* series). The group comprised a real mix of Litvish, Chassidish and Sephardi *avreichim* both from Eretz Yisroel and abroad.

When one of my neighbors started teaching *safrus*, I jumped at the opportunity. I always had creative and artistic leanings, as well as an attachment to the written words of the Torah. The idea that I can actually create a physical object which would be imbued with

*kedushah* also appealed to me. As I had dreamt about having my own real kosher Megillas Shir HaShirim for reading at the time of Kabbalas Shabbos, I figured that instead of spending the money (which I didn't really have) to buy one, I might as well invest in learning the trade.

That decision served me well, as I have been able to turn this occupation into a livelihood as our family has grown.

My father bought the first Megillas Esther I wrote. He reads from it every year for many family members, including his mother—my grandmother. I remember hearing how excited she was to see the *megillah*, proud that her grandson was a real *sofer*. It was even more interesting to hear it from her, as a member of the generation that wanted to see their children as doctors and lawyers.

After some years in Modi'in Illit, a married cousin with several children followed suit and came to join us from Los Angeles. There weren't enough Americans in the neighborhood to make it comfortable enough for her, so they ended up moving to a more Anglo neighborhood in Yerushalayim, where her husband also learnt *safrus*. Even though they ended up moving back to the U.S. after a number of years here, her husband still makes an income from the trade he learnt here—writing *sifrei Torah*, *tefillin* and *mezuzos*.

I ended up moving up north with my family to a new Chareidi *kehillah* in the neighborhood of Givat HaMoreh in Afula. What allowed for our move is the fact that *safrus* is an occupation that is not dependent on location. It was an amazing experience to take part in the growth of a new community in Eretz Yisroel, contributing our talents and efforts to make it happen. After several years there, we moved to Yerushalayim to be closer to my aging grandfather who had meanwhile immigrated here, where, utilizing the connections I have made up north and elsewhere, I am involved in promoting the more-affordable communities of Eretz Yisroel for the An-

glo-Chareidi community, mostly in the north and south of the country.

Being the oldest in my family, I was the first one to establish myself here in Eretz Yisroel. Several siblings thereafter followed me, with two sisters currently living here with their families and other siblings coming to visit occasionally including when they are here on their post-high school or seminary stint. My parents also come to visit and to share in *simchahs*.

I think my parents see Eretz Yisroel as the future not just of the Jewish people in general, but of our family specifically. Having grandchildren that are playing in the streets of Yerushalayim and elsewhere in Eretz Yisroel makes them feel strongly connected to this amazing part of our nation's history that is playing out now. When, at the end of the Pesach Seder, they say "*l'shanah haba'ah biYerushalayim*," it is a Yerushalayim that is much more tangible to them, not just some esoteric concept. They've been here, they are represented here, and they have a future here.

I am proud to be part of that future.





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### *The Security Situation*

*When, as a bochur, I decided—with my parents' approval—that I was to go to learn in Eretz Yisroel, there were several relatives who expressed concern about the security situation in Eretz Yisroel.*

*It was just a few days before I was scheduled to leave home that my father and a few of my siblings went to do some shopping. While at the store, a gun-wielding teenager forced everyone into the freezer while he cleaned out the cash registers. (The cashier led them instead into the refrigerator.) Although, boruch HaShem, the traumatic ordeal lasted just a short while, without any injuries, I was thereafter not subject to any dissuasion due to security concerns...*

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## FIVE TIMES ALIYAH

Binyomin Biron, Kiryat Sefer, Modi'in Illit

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I first came to Eretz Yisroel as a *bochur*. I had previously been involved in *kiruv* activities in Kiev. At the end of the school year, my brother-in-law who was living in Eretz Yisroel suggested that I continue on to *yeshivah* here, being that I was already so much closer in Kiev to Eretz Yisroel than from back home in the US. With my parents' approval, I came to learn in the Ponevezh Yeshivah. Once here, my brother-in-law suggested that I try to just imitate the Israeli dialect of speech (including resorting to the guttural “*reish*”), as this would help me acclimate myself to speaking Hebrew and make me comfortable while doing so. I also practiced my Hebrew by speaking to Israeli kids who were happy to be of help with my Hebrew vocabulary.

While I was here in Eretz Yisroel, it was eventually time to start *shidduchim*. I fortunately found someone who was also interested in living here, and although we went back to the US to get married, we came back to Eretz Yisroel shortly thereafter. Although we had both come to Eretz Yisroel before, this time it was more significant because we were now establishing a home here.

After we had done our own “*aliyah*,” establishing ourselves here in Eretz Yisroel, we decided to go through the process of what the Israeli government calls “*aliyah*”—as in obtaining Israeli citizenship. This would allow us to work here legally, get some benefits, and save a bit of money (e.g. cheaper health insurance, possibly lower home purchase tax, etc.). We know people who choose to live here without becoming Israeli citizens, but we didn't want to have to renew our visas and be subject to the whims of the Interior Ministry clerks, or have it easier to decide to move back. Though, for some people that works better.

When we went to the Interior Ministry with all of our documents to process our citizenship request, there was a minor issue with one of my documents which prevented my request from immediately being processed. I was going to fix the issue, but a friend, who *b'siyatta diShmaya* “happened” to be there just then, alerted me to the fact that as a male Israeli citizen eligible for the draft, I would be subject to some restrictions regarding the length of time I may be out of the country. This held true even though I was a full-time learner and would not be drafted. Because this friend knew about my *kiruv* activities, he advised me not to apply for aliyah so I could travel if necessary. I decided I would push off the process for myself, and at that time only my wife obtained citizenship,

I was eventually offered a job in a *kiruv kollel* in Moscow. They wanted a commitment of at least two years, but we ended up staying there slightly more than three. I would not have taken up such an offer from a *kollel* in the US, because there would be a risk of finding ourselves stuck there—after all, we were both originally from the US and had family there. As for Russia, there really wasn't anything that would keep us there for the long term and prevent us from fulfilling our goal of settling in Eretz Yisroel.

When our oldest child was going to enter *kita aleph* (first grade), we decided, with guidance from Gedolim, that it was time to reestablish ourselves in Eretz Yisroel, this time as a small family. We weren't going to wait until the kids got older when the adjustment would be more difficult. We really wanted the *chinuch* available in Eretz Yisroel, especially in a place like Kiryat Sefer. The *chinuch* here is on a very high level—there is more Yiddishkeit, more *kedushah*, less *gashmiyus*, and less exposure to *tum'ah*. Here, learning Torah is most valued, *tzaddikim* are the role models, and there is a general atmosphere of *yir'as Shomayim*. Although earning money, having a car, and similar materialistic items might be important, it's not the focus.

We are privileged to raise our children in a place that is more closed and protected. Such communities exist back in the US, but they're still more vulnerable to the influences and social pressures of their country and general society.

Several years after we were back in Eretz Yisroel, I completed the process of citizenship, further strengthening my connection to the Land, at least in a technical way.

Here's an observation of mine: Among the American *bochurim* who are here learning in Eretz Yisroel, there are at least some who would also like to establish themselves here. Many are unaware that they don't have to go back to the US for potential *shidduchim*. There are many regular Beis Yaakov girls from America who are already here that also want to live here and who have already started *shidduchim*. Some of them are here in post-seminary programs and others have immigrated with their families. Although the boys are primarily here to learn, I don't see why those interested shouldn't try *shidduchim* here.

While there is a possibility of finding a *shidduch* in *chutz laAretz* who would also tentatively agree to come to live in Eretz Yisroel, even with all the goodwill it doesn't mean it's going to happen. Good intentions aside, there are differences one would have to adjust to over here—not having two cars, getting along with Jews from “*arba kanfos ha'aretz*”—i.e. many different cultures, and many other things—someone who's not wholeheartedly committed to living here might just not get over any real or perceived difficulties. As for the pool of potential *shidduchim* for Americans being smaller here, well, the bottom line is you only need one...




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### *Still Ascending*

*I came as a bochur, came again with my wife, came a third time as a small family, and have gone through the citizenship process twice—once for my wife, and once for myself. But, as Rav Zev Leff, shlita, says (I learn in the yeshivah in his Moshav Matityahu in the mornings), aliyah doesn't end at the airport (or in the Interior Ministry). It's really two stages—the first step is leaving America behind, and the next step is to keep shteiging here.*

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## THIS IS OUR OWN

Yosef Zev Braver, Romema, Yerushalayim

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As a Jew, this is my real home. It's my own culture, my own alphabet all around me. Prophecies come alive. A large portion of our Torah is relevant only here.

It's only my first day in Eretz Yisroel and I already receive Birkas Kohanim. When I buy any produce, I have to make sure *terumos* and *ma'aseros* were separated or do it myself. This is HaShem's special Land and His Presence is manifested also by His special rules for what grows here. It makes His Presence feel even more real.

For the Chinese, it's China. That is their natural habitat and that is where they thrive. For the Japanese, it's Japan. For the Spaniards, it's Spain. For us Yidden, it's Eretz Yisroel. This Land is suited to us, and we to the Land. Any place in *golus* has not held us for more than a few hundred years. We cannot really thrive anywhere else, not even in Williamsburg or Lakewood. This Land has grown the largest concentration of world-recognized Gedolim from across the Torah spectrum.

If you were to dig under my former house in Brooklyn, you would probably find nothing, maybe mechanical oil. Anywhere in our Land, the ground is saturated with history—our own history. There are *kivrei tzaddikim* all around. Even Adam HaRishon is buried here, and that's world history.

Not so far outside of the Williamsburg bubble I lived in, kosher food is just a small percentage of what's available. In our own country, the percentages are the other way around.

My first exposure to the beautiful fabric of this nation we are part of was in Uman on Rosh HaShanah. (I always say if you would like to see how we will look like after the redemption, just come to Uman Rosh HaShanah. It's a yearly rehearsal of the Geulah hosted by

Rabbi Nachman.) I identified strongly with a scene from a story of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, where two people lost in a forest take shelter in a tree from where they hear the scary sounds of all the different kinds of wild animals. At first, they were shaken with fear and did not pay attention to the sounds, but as they paid closer attention, they heard there was a very wondrous sound of music and song which was an extremely awesome and powerful pleasure to hear. It was me who was lost in that scary forest of all different kinds of Eretz Yisroel's people in Uman, originally as foreign and scary to me as the "wild animals" in the story, but as time went on and I became more comfortable with the "sounds," I picked up on the beauty and wonder of the makeup of Am Yisroel.

Back in Williamsburg, I would *daven* at "The Shtiebel," where there is a big map of Eretz Yisroel hanging on the wall and the Mizrach was designed to resemble the Kosel. Eretz Yisroel is the primary subject over there. Also, many Israelis would pass through in another shul that I attended, some of them collecting funds for marrying off their children. I would tell them that creating such a necessity for them to fundraise abroad, is HaShem's way of making sure to bring a lifeline—the atmosphere of Eretz Yisroel—to us Yidden in *chutz la'Aretz*.

After the second year I was in Uman Rosh HaShanah, as a *chosson* already, I took the opportunity to continue for a short visit to Eretz Yisroel, primarily to get *hadrachah* from R' Yaakov Meir Shechter, *shlita*. I of course also went around to the *mekomos hakedoshim*, including Meron, Tzefas, and Teveria. A short while before that, I remember saying from R' Nosson of Breslov's *Likuttei Tefillos*, "*vezakeini lavo l'Eretz Yisroel*," and not understanding why it's such a *zechus* to come to Eretz Yisroel, but I figured that if he wrote it, I'm not going to skip it. It took some more time for my connection to Eretz Yisroel to develop, and for the first seven years of married life, I was still in Williamsburg.

At one point in time I decided to quit my full-time job and become self-employed as an IT guy. At that time, one of the Israelis who knew me heard that I was free from my job, so he offered me a job in Eretz Yisroel with a very generous weekly salary, but only if I would give an answer that I am ready to move there within two weeks. It was too short of a notice for me, but it did make me aware that a decent *parnossah* is possible in Eretz Yisroel.

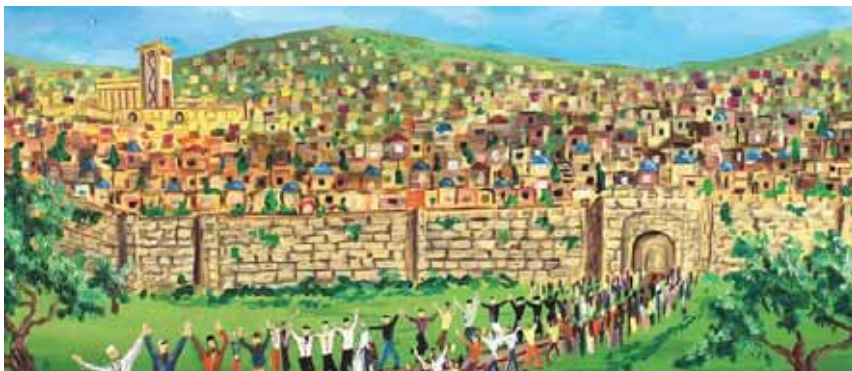
I always knew that I didn't want to invest heavily in being connected to *chutz laAretz*, so I was glad that my first car lease in NY was only for twenty-four months. I didn't want any magnetizing *ratzon* keeping me from moving on.

A lot of people I know don't think of Eretz Yisroel as a normal place to live comfortably. They are not aware that there are tens, if not hundreds and thousands, of *chutznikim* that are living here and enjoying it. With research, you can find people here just like you—Yeshivish, Heimish, or any type of Chareidi.

There is an important teaching of R' Nachman to keep in mind though—the *middah* of *arichus apayim* (patience) is a prerequisite for being *zocheh* to Eretz Yisroel, and Eretz Yisroel is a catalyst for developing *arichus apayim*. Be excited, but don't jump into things; you've got to have *bitachon*, but be careful and calculated. Flexibility is also of utmost importance.

After the Holocaust, America was an amazing and beautiful stop, but why stay in *golus* if HaShem is “screaming” in His way that we should come home?






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### *Vacation Is Over, but We're Still Here*

*One year, while we were still living in the US and our oldest child was six years old, we made a calculation that instead of going to the mountains for the summer we could financially pull off a five-week summer vacation in Eretz Yisroel.*

*Once here, it ended up working out for us to stay for Elul and Tishrei as well, so we enrolled our children in the local mosdos. Once they were accepted to the mosdos, why should we go back?*

*As an IT freelancer, I still worked with my customers remotely. Eventually, I migrated from working remotely with clients from abroad in NY. I launched my “Computer Expert” services in the local market in the Yerushalayim area, and I now perform as a Chasidic singer with my own music band for kumzitzim and boutique events.*

*During the first winter, we ended up going back to the US for a month and a-half for the weddings of two siblings. My children attended their original schools, and this way we all had the chance to part from our family and friends before coming back to our new life in Eretz Yisroel, which started almost by chance—or more accurately—by the hashgachah pratis that surrounds us here.*

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## COUNTRY LIVING IN A YERUSHALAYIM SUBURB

Eliyahu Grumet, Agan HaAyalot

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About twelve years ago a friend of ours who went into real estate was selling houses in Agan HaAyalot (also known as Givat Ze'ev HaChadashah) and suggested that we look into buying an apartment there. At that time there were only shells of a few buildings. The neighborhood was originally designed as an expansion of the existing municipality of Givat Ze'ev, but because there was no interest from the non-religious, it was eventually—and very successfully—remarketed as a Chareidi neighborhood. Its proximity to Yerushalayim and the substantially lower prices of its spacious suburban-style housing—all which is within a sheltered Chareidi enclave with no *chillul Shabbos* in sight—was a winning combination.

We originally came to Eretz Yisroel after getting married in the US with the idea that we would be here for about five years or so. We thought that buying an apartment would be a good investment even if we would end up moving back, so we signed a contract on one of those shells. We moved into our house when it was fully built three and a-half years later. (Today the pace of construction is much faster.)

After settling down in Agan HaAyalot and realizing we were here to stay, my wife, who had trained and interned here in Eretz Yisroel as a speech therapist in an American program, went through the process of obtaining citizenship and getting licensed so she could legally work here. Her background is very useful here for helping the local English speakers.

Agan HaAyalot translates to “Doe Basin.” Living in the mountains the whole year round, we occasionally get to see some deer running around. I find it to be a very pleasant place to live in, while being close enough to the hustle and bustle of the city (only six miles

away) but still like country living. The houses and buildings are spread apart. Many apartments have private entrances and many of the buildings have only four apartments. There is much more space, quiet, and privacy than in nearby Yerushalayim, where the developers are capitalizing on the limited space as much as they can. Here you can buy much more for your money. For about two-million shekels (under \$600,000), you can get a four-bedroom apartment between 120 to 140 square meters (1500 square feet). There are private homes being built as well.

The Yerushalayim neighborhood of Ramot with its new and large shopping center is only a ten-minute car ride away, so Agan HaAyalot really is the closest thing to living in Yerushalayim. Most people in Agan HaAyalot have cars, but it is not a necessity. (We lived here without one for several years.) There is a small local shopping center, a hardware store, a toy store, medical offices, and other small businesses. It's also just a short bus ride to get into Yerushalayim. The bus fare between here and Yerushalayim is even the same as for the inner-city buses in Yerushalayim, so we really are like any other Yerushalayim neighborhood. There are many people here who work or learn in Yerushalayim. There also is a busload of *avreichim* (with many Americans) going every day directly to the Mir Yeshivah.

Most of the English speakers here moved in after deciding to settle down here in Eretz Yisroel after being part of one of the more transient communities in Yerushalayim. Many have learned in Mir, Brisk, Toras Moshe, and other similar *yeshivos*. There are some older people who have already married off children and even grandchildren, who moved here after selling more expensive properties in Yerushalayim. In general, though, it is a young community, with most people moving here close to their thirties.

Today there are about nine-hundred families in the neighborhood. About 70% are Hebrew speakers, and 30% are English speakers. The Americans are generally bunched together in the same buildings or

on the same block. The two *chadarim* and one girls' school serve everyone together. There is an English track in the preschool, but it's just to ease the transition. They're eventually integrated into the mainstream system with everyone else.

Community life here is amazing. About five years ago we built an American-style shul/*kehillah*. Even the furniture in the shul is in the American style, with chairs and tables like in the Agudah-style *bale-batish* shuls back in America. The official language of the shul is Hebrew, so Israelis who want to join can, but most members are English speakers. The Israelis who join are attracted by the warmth and community feel. The *rav* is English speaking, but came to Eretz Yisroel at the age of three so he has been well integrated into the Israeli Chareidi society. Though his *derashos* are in Hebrew, he answers *she'eilos* in either language.

Our shul is one of twelve shuls in the neighborhood. Six are *nusach* Ashkenaz, four Sephardic, one *nusach* Sefard, and one Belz. One of the shuls is a hub for working Israeli Chareidim. Everyone has a place here.

The second-day Yom Tov *minyán* is at our shul, but it is primarily for family and guests of the residents, because most of the English-speaking locals are here to stay. However, there is an increasing trend of Americans buying vacation homes in the neighborhood—including some parents of the locals.

With many like-minded people around and more space inside and outside the house, people here are happy and content. With significant construction going on the population is expected to double within a few years. Maybe there's a place here for you too.




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### *Still in Eretz Yisroel*

*When we moved out of Yerushalayim, many of our family and friends were a bit skeptical. They felt that by moving out of Yerushalayim, we were moving out of Eretz Yisroel. In reality though, this unique suburb of Agan HaAyalot with its proximity to Yerushalayim has enabled people to stay longer—many even permanently.*

*We told them that we're still much closer to the Kosel than from those people still in America. Every Chol HaMoed we take a family trip to be oleh l'regel to the Old City. We tell our children that while there are thousands of people that spend thousands of dollars to travel there, we are fortunate that we can do it by just a cheap, quick bus ride.*

*Most of us Americans are living far away from our families, so we are here for each other like family. It has happened more than once that after a Friday afternoon birth, neighbors and members of our close-knit kehillah put together a shalom zachar within a short time.*

*This really is a wonderful and successful community.*

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## VALUING YISHUV ERETZ YISROEL

Leib K., Yerushalayim

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My parents had lived in Eretz Yisroel for a short time after they got married. They bought an apartment in the Matersdorf neighborhood of Yerushalayim as they apparently intended to stay here long-term. They went back to the U.S. to be with my grandparents for Yom Tov and ended up staying in America. My mother always told me, “This was the biggest mistake that I ever made.”

I grew up in Lakewood, New Jersey. As a child, I frequently heard my mother asking my father, “Can we move to Eretz Yisroel?” My father would respond that we could only realistically make such a move after the youngest child graduates from high school to avoid *chinuch* issues such a move would involve.

I came to Eretz Yisroel for summer vacation after tenth grade and stayed by my married sibling who was living in Yerushalayim. I traveled around the country touring and sightseeing. This was beneficial to me when I came back a year later for *yeshivah*—I was not distracted from my learning unlike many others to whom the country was new and exciting.

As a *bochur*, I had once heard a *shiur* by Rav Asher Zelig Rubinstein, *zt”l*, in which he mentioned a statement made by the Chofetz Chaim about Eretz Yisroel being the safest place in the world. This had a profound impact on me and is part of what made me comfortable with living here.

Several years later, when I was a *chosson*, a family in the Sorotzkin neighborhood hosted me for the night of Shemini Atzeres. My host asked me if I was keeping one or two days of Yom Tov. I didn’t know what to answer as I hadn’t thought about it. My host mentioned that one of the biggest *poskim*, HaRav Yisroel Belsky, *zt”l*, was staying by one of his children just downstairs and I could

ask him for a *p'sak*. I found him sitting and learning in the *sukkah*. I told him that my *kallah* and I were planning to start out in Eretz Yisroel, but with no commitment for the future. I also mentioned that we did indeed want to live here as long as possible. He said that if my *kallah* would agree to me accepting a *shteller* (paid rabbinic position) here in Eretz Yisroel, then I should keep one day. I had no idea and no way of finding out, as my *kallah* was in America and it was Yom Tov, but when I did have a chance to ask afterwards, she gave a positive response.

After getting married in the U.S., we came to Eretz Yisroel a short while before Pesach. Since we had just arrived, we stayed in Eretz Yisroel for Pesach. In retrospect, I wouldn't advise newly married couples to make their own Pesach away from family. Life continued and it began to get difficult from a financial standpoint. After Pesach we rethought the issue of settling in Eretz Yisroel. We believed it really wasn't financially possible for us to stay here long-term. We asked HaRav Belsky, through a cousin who was learning in Torah Vodaath at the time, if this would mean we should revert to keeping two days of Yom Tov. He answered in the affirmative, and that's what we did for the following Yomim Tovim.

I think it is very hard for young couples to live here if the wife does not have a job. There is also a psychological difficulty for women who can earn dollars back in the U.S. and instead work here at a job that pays that same number—only in shekels! Though the alternative of staying at home is worse because it leads to homesickness, which is a sure way to get right back on the plane. I know of someone who came here as a newlywed without his wife having a job, and to make matters worse, he stayed in *yeshivah* during lunch break. Although he really wanted to stay, they didn't last here too long.

The following Pesach we went back to the U.S. for Yom Tov. After coming back to Eretz Yisroel, we realized that we were much

happier being in Eretz Yisroel. We felt that the level of simplicity and *ruchniyus* here really suited us more. After asking another *she'eilah*, we were back to keeping one day of Yom Tov.

We first lived in Yerushalayim's Romeima neighborhood, but I was looking for a neighborhood where there was a shul in which the *rav* would give the *derashos* in English. We now rent in an area where there are several such shuls nearby (Ramat Eshkol, Sanhedriya and Sanhedriya Murchevet). Though financial struggles are definitely not exclusive to *avreichim* in Eretz Yisroel—and I don't think that finances here must entail being *somech al haness* any more than in *chutz laAretz*—I feel that at least here in Eretz Yisroel we have a big consolation that while we are emptying out our pockets and paying our rent, we have the added value of paying for our fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *yishuv Eretz Yisroel*.

When my youngest sibling graduated from high school, my father was in extremely poor health. We did our research and found that all the advanced medical equipment and services he required were also available in Eretz Yisroel. This enabled my parents to move here, and my father was *zocheh* for the last ten months of his life to live here in Eretz Yisroel and to be buried here. Our parents' love for Eretz Yisroel definitely made an impression on us children, and most of my siblings now live here.






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### ***Children and Eretz Yisroel***

*My rebbi, R' Yosef Stern, zt"l, once told me that if I have a choice, it is better to raise children here in Eretz Yisroel, since they will need a lot less gashmiyus compared to what is needed for an average family in chutz laAretz.*

*I once asked my mashgiach why there were certain neighborhoods with a lot of kids from an American background “off the derech.” He said that in his opinion, in many instances, it was because the parents were bashing the same local chinuch system they were sending their children to. If you’re going to move here, you have to back the system you are going to send your children to.*

*An acquaintance moved here with teenage children. Although they had a tough time adjusting, having mentors from Yedidim—an organization which deals with such issues—significantly eased the transition.*

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## GREAT AND SIMPLE ENVIRONMENT

Shaul Klein, Yerushalayim

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I grew up in L.A., studied in Waterbury after high school, and then came to learn in the Mir in Eretz Yisroel. I returned to America and learnt by Rav Asher Weiss in Monsey, NY. I met my wife that year and we settled there. She was finishing her college degree and I was happy learning in *kollel*. My wife had told me how she always imagined raising a family in Eretz Yisroel and it was something really important to her. In 2013, after our first son was born, we finally made the move.

I started out learning in *kollel* and was fortunate to have my parents and in-laws supporting us. However, after about two years of living here, I needed to start thinking about a job.

As it's generally easier to find a job in America, most people in my neighborhood that reach this stage of life move back to the States, but we wanted to try to make it work here. With a bachelor's degree in accounting from America, I found an amazing job in Tel Aviv that had friendly people and a warm environment. At this job, I really had the opportunity to learn a lot about the international tax arena. The starting salaries here are usually in-between half to a third of what people are getting paid in the U.S., but after sitting down with my wife and going through it, while debating whether that was a reason to go back to America, we found that half of the salary was very much worth it.

First of all, there is nothing we can compare to this environment in which we are able to raise our kids. I love watching my kids start their lives at a higher level. They literally feel Shabbos and the Yomim Tovim here. Already a month before Yom Tov, the stores change over to the seasonal items, and the whole country is getting ready for Yom Tov. Instead of billboards they see pictures of

Gedolim. The streets are flowing with clean Jewish things instead of the things I wouldn't wish my kids to be exposed to.

Their primary language is Hebrew, and they are able to learn with no language barrier. As where I struggled with *limudei kodesh*, they fly. Also, I was amazed at the curriculum. The kids are taught on a higher level. Even if they don't fully grasp everything now, the seeds are planted for the future, though I was very surprised to actually see just how much my six-year-old does pick up and how he explains difficult *parashah* topics with a clear understanding.

Secondly, as the expenses and standards of living are astronomically higher in the U.S., even with a higher salary it would still be difficult to make ends meet there. Tuition, health insurance, and expected gifts and vacations add up to much more than anything else here. I love that my kids love life and the simplicity of it—without all the latest gadgets and without comparing with their friends about which one of them got a more expensive gift for Chanukah or birthdays. We don't have iPads for all the kids like we know some families in America do (and no we're not blaming or shaming anyone here). I just find it so nice that the mentality of life here isn't to be hooked on these things. It is just to be responsible, help out, play outside, ride bikes, and be creative. It's nice to see how many games the boys can create with a pile of sticks that they find behind the buildings.

So, we decided that we need to get adjusted to living a somewhat simpler life and we are determined to make it a happier one. It's not just the kids that live more simply; we don't want to be hypocrites! Though—yes—it was an adjustment!

We sometimes joke that very wealthy people are willing to spend tens of thousands of dollars to come here just for one holiday when we are able to do it for every holiday. We get to live in the center of the world where HaShem Himself is the One Who watches over us, which I think is another reason why I love living here.

We recently had a miracle where we were expecting a child. The doctors told us there was no hope and that an abortion was our best option. We went to Rav Chaim Kanievsky, *shlita*, who told us that everything was going to be fine. We grabbed onto his words and davened and cried out to HaShem, and we really saw one miracle after another. B”H we have a beautiful healthy boy. (The details and struggle about it are in the *Mishpacha*, Shavuot 5779.) There is a connection that I feel towards HaShem here—He is the One watching over Klal Yisroel here and He feels so close to us. I know that there are many Gedolim in America, but there’s just something so special about being able to talk to Rav Chaim, go to the Kosel and pour my heart out, go to Kever Rochel, or walk the streets that I know our Avos walked on.

We try to go visit the United States every summer so our children can spend time with their cousins and so that we can reconnect with our siblings. We love going and enjoying a little bit of the American things that we reminisce about, even though the truth is that slowly but surely, increasingly, American products are showing up over here. But after a few weeks in America we’re always so grateful that we get to leave that all behind us and come back to our real home—here in Eretz Yisroel.



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### ***Grounded to Yiddishkeit***

*As someone who works, I sometimes feel myself slipping into the working life. I love my job. I love the conferences, fancy work environment, and the expensive lunch or dinner meetings—the executive world. But instead of drowning in it, I get to walk outside after work and see Yerushalayim’s streets with Jews all over and my own beautiful apartment. I feel so much more connected and grounded to my Yiddishkeit and my life because of it. I recently joined a Friday kollel where we learn all the halachos one should know about in the working field, and again I find that it’s not two separate worlds as one of working and one of Torah. Here I find that it’s easier for me to stay connected to my growth in Yiddishkeit through my job, while I believe I would have a harder time staying as connected had we been living in America.*

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## IT'S A PACKAGE DEAL

Shira Yael Klein, Beitar Illit

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While I was a seminary student here in Eretz Yisroel, it became increasingly clear to me that I wanted to live here, so I kept my eyes wide open to see how life here really played out and if and how it could work for me. In retrospect, I must say that after eight years and four kids, I haven't had a major surprise yet.

I just want people to know that life in many places here in Eretz Yisroel—the lifestyle, values, and education system—is very different than that in America. I love this life, but it is different, and it does have its challenges. People shouldn't come here thinking they can continue living just like they did in America, only with the perks of living in Eretz Yisroel. Sometimes the challenges actually “are” the positives. That's because life here is just “different.”

Many communities in Eretz Yisroel are more polarized, and the penalties for non-conformity are higher. Adults who hate labels and stereotypes and see themselves as a unique mix of the best of multiple worlds will have a hard time in those communities. Take a city like Beitar for example where I live—even if they befriend like-minded people, no *chinuch* system here supports that attitude. Children need clarity, harmony between home and school, and a peer group to which they feel they belong. From my observation, the children of adults who try to raise their kids in the almost non-existent middle ground (i.e. between Chareidi and Modern Orthodox), usually wind up going up or down spiritually—and unfortunately, down is much easier than up. When I was in seminary, somebody advised me that if I wanted to live here, I should pick the group that I wanted to be part of and conform to their standards. It was good advice, and I took it.

It's harder to acquire *gashmiyus* but easier to acquire *ruchniyus*. It's harder to make money, but easier to get the things that money can't buy.

People here live in more crowded conditions and smaller apartments. This fosters more interaction with neighbors. As a general rule, Americans value self-sufficiency, while Israelis value *chessed*. Borrowing, lending, and helping neighbors is a way of life, including passing along things that you don't need, from leftovers to clothing and from furniture to appliances. My older children spend a lot of time outside, riding bikes, building forts, and otherwise keeping themselves busy with their friends. They are certainly not plugged into screens. This lifestyle also fosters independence. Children in Eretz Yisroel are more independent than their American counterparts. Our six and seven-year-old boys are able to travel to their local schools by themselves on public buses.

It's a simpler and more wholesome life. I feel like I'm raising my kids in a previous generation. Also, I'm raising my kids in a Chareidi bubble. While at some point our children will encounter the bigger world, the values and norms of that world will be abnormal to them.

A word about finances: Tuition, childcare, and healthcare are substantially cheaper here. Just to shock you, *cheider* is around 300 *shekalim* (about \$85) per month, while if you send your girls to the "public" Beis Yaakov schools (as opposed to private schools), there is no tuition. Over three months of paid maternity leave is no joke either. If you live in a place like Beitar, you can easily live without a car. The standard of living is also lower. Then again, income is also substantially lower. (This is especially true if the husband is learning, which is more common here than it is in *chutz laAretz*).

I don't know how to describe it, but there is just more spirituality in the air. *Emunah*, *bitachon*, and *yir'as Shomayim* come a lot easier

here. I think that this is a function of Eretz Yisroel itself, plus of the nature of the Chareidi community here.

This focus on *ruchniyus* leads to some major differences in the boys' *chinuch* system. The American system tries to produce well-rounded students who know some *kodesh* and some *chol* and are somewhat prepared to both learn and work. In contrast, the Israeli Chareidi system in many communities is designed to produce *talmidei chachamim*. It's a higher-risk, higher return investment. A kid who makes it will go so much further than he would in America (at least in the Torah-studies department), but there are more kids who don't make it, and would need extra parental input to make them happy with being well-rounded, *shiur*-going, working men. It is definitely true that "success" is far more narrowly defined for boys here, especially during their school years. As for adults, roughly half of the men in Beitar work. It is also true that at least in the Litvish world, learning is considered the most prestigious.

I speak as the mother of two boys with ADD/ADHD who works very hard to help them succeed within the system. One started Ritalin and is now one of the top boys in his class and loving the experience. The other is in a *kita mekademet*, a special education environment within a regular school, with smaller class sizes, more individual attention, built-in therapies, etc. I am very glad that this classroom exists within a regular *cheider*, with no extra costs involved. When I lived in L.A., no such option existed. There are definitely many ways to help children who are struggling, although some of these struggles would be alleviated by a more flexible system.

It is a package deal; but I chose this package, and I've never regretted it.





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### ***Finally! An American-Style Kehillah Coming to Beitar B!***

*In America, your shul is also your social kehillah and support system, but in Eretz Yisroel's Chareidi Litvish community, this is not so common. First of all, the Israelis usually have a lot more family support. Secondly (perhaps consequently), Israelis tend to have a shtiebel mentality, where they daven each tefillah wherever it happens to be most convenient, as opposed to seeing themselves as belonging to a particular shul.*

*American immigrants, usually without nearby family, sorely lack this support. Thus, so far, Beitar addresses this need with the mere presence of other chutznikim. The Beitar N'shei has a few melaveh malkahs each year, organizes meals in case of need (after birth, etc.), and operates a very popular email list. In Beitar A, there are two English-speaking kehillos, Rabbi Friedman's Yeshivas Birkas Mordechai and Rabbi Stern's shul, Ohel Torah. As for Beitar B, my husband's friend, Rabbi Zevy Stark, is building an American-style shul/kehillah.*

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## NATURE AND RUCHNIYUS

Binyamin Klempner, Teveria Illit, Teveria

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I love nature and I'm also attracted to *ruchniyus*. It was only natural that I made Eretz Yisroel my home, being the place where *ruchniyus* is natural and where nature is *ruchniyus*.

From the Teveria apartment building I live in, there are views of the beautiful Kinneret and its green surroundings. I enjoy looking at the scenery and connecting to the *kedushah*. It's not just a big and beautiful lake—all other lakes in the world get their *chiyus* from HaShem “personally” keeping His “eyes” on this one. This is true as well for all the other elements that make up nature—the mountains, valleys, plains, skies, oceans, and everything else you can think of. The *kedushah* root of all of it is in Eretz Yisroel.

One thing I love about Eretz Yisroel is that I can find a place where I can be a *frum* Yid and also ride a horse. (Maybe not really in the city, but not too far out.) I need access to nature, and here I have all of that as a *frum* Yid who is part of a normal *kehillah*.

Within the small area of Eretz Yisroel, there are plains, deserts, an alpine mountain (the Hermon), forests, a coastal region, and more. I try to go around as much as I can, exploring both my immediate surroundings and the wider area.

It used to be that we had to be in *golus* to collect the *nitzotzos* of *kedushah* from all around, but now many are making their way straight to us in Eretz Yisroel. Those coffee beans from Costa Rica don't need us to be anywhere outside of Eretz Yisroel for us to make a *brachah* on them and thus be *metaken* them. We can find them in the coffee corner in our local *shtiebel*, and that's just one small example.

I originally came to Eretz Yisroel from the U.S. on a tour, but while on the bus from the airport I was already sure this was the

place I wanted to call home. My wife had been here for seminary, so she also knew what Eretz Yisroel was like. We lived in Milwaukee for the first two years of our marriage, which is I think a great community to be part of if you must live in *chutz laAretz*. We then had the *zechus* of pursuing opportunities in *ruchniyus* here in Eretz Yisroel, eventually ending up in Teveria.

We came about two years ago to join a small *kehillah* in Teveria Illit. We were previously living in Ramat Beit Shemesh, but the rising prices forced us out. The warm family-oriented feel of the small *kehillah* and the slower pace of life here in Teveria was a welcomed change from the larger communities we had lived in before. My wife and children quickly made many friends, as might be expected in a new community.

We are now part of the unbroken chain of *frum* Yidden who have had a long and ancient presence here in Teveria, sanctifying this place with their Torah and *mitzvos*. Though there recently has been a renaissance of Chareidi life here, their presence has always existed. Since the days of Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, *talmid* of the Mezritcher Maggid, who lived here in Teveria about 250 years ago, many Chassidim have called this place home, infusing the city with a spirit of Torah and *avodas HaShem*.

More recently, there has been a steady growth in the *frum* community here, which includes many different sects of Chareidim. I sighted a busload of Toldos Aharon Chassidim returning from Rosh HaShanah in Yerushalayim. Karlin has an impressive representation and so does Sanz. The Litvish also have recently started a community here, and Sephardi *bonei Torah* have always been around. There are some Slonimers and Lelovers as well.

Every week, more people arrive here in Teveria. New schools open and new *batei midrash* are built. One of the *kehillas* had built a new and beautiful *beis medrash* which was filled beyond capacity

just two weeks after its inauguration, as they had not anticipated such quick growth.

The communities are primarily Israeli; though, there are a few English-speakers spread around, and even an English-speaking Rebbe (Lizhensk). I would be happy if other English speakers would join me in my community to take advantage of the opportunities Teveria affords.

Just a short few years ago, when I would have occasion to visit Ramat Beit Shemesh and people would hear that I live in Teveria, they would react incredulously, as if I was living on the moon. Now, people are asking me about what's happening here, as it's becoming a more mainstream option for many.

The *heimish* infrastructure is well-developed and getting better all the time. There is also the wonderful pleasant feeling of the city—warm and inviting, quiet and relaxed. Cars stop for pedestrians with a smile.



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### ***Respect for the Land***

*Several years ago, we were operating a small vegetable farm in Yish'i, a small moshav near Beit Shemesh. After moving to Teveria, we restarted as a compost manufacturer.*

*Eretz Yisroel has a relatively dense population and there are not enough places to handle the waste produced. By turning food waste into compost, we are not only making a parnassah, we are also minimizing the amount of garbage piling up on the Land. If this is an important thing to do anywhere we live, it is all the more so in Eretz HaKodesh.*

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## NO REASON TO GO BACK

Eli Mendel, Tzefas

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I grew up in Manchester, attended school in Yeshivah Ketanah Chayei Olam in London, and then the Yeshivah of Gateshead. Afterwards, I went to Eretz Yisroel to learn by R' Tzvi Kushelevsky for two years, just because that's what people were doing.

A *shidduch* was suggested for me with an American Israeli from Tzefas, but I wasn't sure if I wanted to live here or in Manchester because of the extremely different mentalities. Because I wanted to leave the door open to go back to Manchester, the *shidduch* was finalized without my commitment to living here in Eretz Yisroel. My wife suggested we first try living here for a year, and I felt secure doing so as I had "*pas besalo*"—that if I ever wanted, we could move back to Manchester. We have been here for nine years already and are very happy here. I see no reason to go back. In fact, we can't even see ourselves living in *chutz laAretz* anymore.

We started out in Yerushalayim. It was quite ridiculous to pay a whole month's salary for renting a basement, so we moved to Tzefas where the housing is much more affordable. You can even buy a private villa here—including a small unit to rent out to others—for less than a small apartment in Yerushalayim.

We came to Tzefas several years ago as part of the first major wave of young Chareidi families to move in. Back then there were four dogs in my building, which is not a common sight in your typical Chareidi neighborhood. Today there are none, and instead, you get to see lots of *frum* kids crossing the street to *cheider* or to school, just like in any other Chareidi city. If your impression of Tzefas is based on what you saw when you came here for vacation—even if it was only a few short years ago—I suggest you come to check it out again.

Here in Tzefas there is an atmosphere of peace and simplicity—you can be your real self here, as there is no need to show off. People here are friendly. In a way it's like a *shtetl* (little village), but it's also like a city. Besides for being beautiful and peaceful, Tzefas has everything we need. There are all kinds of *mosdos* and shuls here. Though I send my kids to a good Chassidish school, I am learning in a Litvish *kollel*. There are good Litvish and Chassidish *chadorim* and schools through high school. The Chassidish are united here and not sectored. We feel we all need each other, so there can be a *kana'i*, a Belzer *chossid* and a Rachmastrivka *chossid* all joined, putting their personal *yichus* aside to make things happen in the community.

There are shops of every kind here and none of them are open on Shabbos. Though there are many Jews here who are traditional, they are nonetheless connected to and have respect for Yiddishkeit. Neighborhoods are becoming more Chareidi as the non-religious are not really moving in. There aren't any churches or mosques here either.

There are also interesting job opportunities here. I get paid by someone to drive down every day to nearby Amuka to *daven* by the *kever* of the holy Tanna, Rabbi Yonasan Ben Uziel. I am also an agent for vacation apartments up north, for groups, *yeshivos*, and families. There are jobs specifically suitable for English speakers to engage in because of so many English-speaking tourists, including in the field of tourism and *kiruv*.

Tzefas has a very large English-speaking community, though they mostly are those who have come here to Eretz Yisroel at a young age and are therefore completely integrated with the Israelis. There are many Jews from France as well.

The calm atmosphere and the comfortable weather here have an appeal no less than places in *chutz laAretz* like where I grew up, while there is also the additional *kedushas Eretz Yisroel*. Being the highest city in Eretz Yisroel at nine-hundred meters above sea level,

the breeze makes it comfortable even in the summer heat. The cold of the winter is something I'm used to from back in England. Being so elevated it often snows here. Magnificent views include the close-by Kinneret to the southeast and the snow-capped Hermon mountain to the north. On a clear day you can see all the way to Haifa on the west coast.

From here I can also easily and quickly get to Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai in Meiron whenever I want to. Some people from *chutz laAretz* pay thousands of dollars to come just for Lag BaOmer, and for me it's almost free.

After all is said, I don't know where people get the notion that Tzefas is all about old *mekubalim* and broken-down houses. With such misconceptions, many people would not dare to live here. If they'd come for just a few weeks they'd be shocked to find it's such a beautiful and livable place, modern, yet with a lot of "character." If they would know how it really is here, they would wish they would have the opportunity to join us. Though maybe not for people who would really miss hectic city life, those who are looking for quiet would really enjoy it here, living in "vacation land" the whole year round.





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### ***It's All in the Mind***

*Among the countless great tzaddikim buried in Tzefas there is one known as R' Leib Ba'al Yissurim (the afflicted one). According to legend, he promised that he would help anyone who needed a yeshuah who would come to his kever and say the whole Tehillim on Erev Shabbos after chatzos.*

*He was one of the first Ashkenazim to settle in Chevron, moving in his later years to Tzefas. Although it is not known what yissurim he went through to acquire this title, all of the early pioneers here in Eretz Yisroel went through substantial yissurim to be zocheh to live here.*

*In these times, the yissurim for us to be zocheh to live in Eretz Yisroel sometimes just amounts to changing our mindset.*

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## HOW WE MADE IT IN ERETZ YISROEL

Meir and Leah Miller, Sanhedriya, Yerushalayim

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It was over fifty years ago when my husband, Meir Miller, first came to Eretz Yisroel as a *bochur* to learn in *yeshivah*. He had a strong desire to learn Torah in Eretz Yisroel and therefore worked hard as a waiter for a whole summer just to save up for a ticket (by boat, in case you were wondering). The difficulties that such a move involved did not daunt him.

He grew up in Providence, Rhode Island, in one of the few *shomer Shabbos* families there. As there were no options for proper *chinuch* in his hometown, from the age of eight and a-half he would commute daily to *cheider* in Boston, Massachusetts, a commute of over fifty miles that took an hour and a-half each way, all by himself. In the following years, he would take along his younger siblings as well. This arrangement lasted until he advanced to *yeshivah* high school in New York.

Not knowing anything about the *yeshivos* in Eretz Yisroel, he inquired about them at the Jewish Agency in New York. They suggested he enroll in one of them, but when he arrived at the *yeshivah*, he found that they could not accept him because they didn't have room. He then decided to go to Yerushalayim. He was referred to a Zionist *yeshivah* there, but he felt the atmosphere just wasn't right for him.

Soon thereafter he chanced upon a childhood friend from America while walking through the Geula neighborhood in Yerushalayim. This friend had been referred to Yeshivas Kamenitz and was slated for an interview with the *rosh yeshivah*, HaGaon HaRav Yitzchok Scheiner, *shlita*. The friend suggested that Meir join him at the *yeshivah* where the *rosh yeshivah* was American-born, and several *talmidim* were from America.

Meir was accepted warmly into the *yeshivah* by Rav Scheiner, and was quickly absorbed into the atmosphere of Yerushalyim, including being exposed to many of its special personalities. It was clear to him that he was here to stay, with his future awaiting him in Yerushalayim.

About four years later, Rebbetzin Herman, the wife of R' Nochum Dovid (son of R' Yaakov Yosef of "All for the Boss" fame) suggested our *shidduch*. I was an American girl, the daughter of Holocaust survivors from Europe, who had come to visit Eretz Yisroel after my first year as a teacher in New York. I was staying by my aunt and uncle in the Yerushalayim neighborhood of Sanhedriya. Yerushalayim captured my heart, and I dreamt of building my life here.

We shared the dream of building a true Jewish Torah home and being *zocheh* to *doros yesharim mevorachim*, not in Providence, not in New York, but in Yerushalayim—Shel Matah and Shel Ma'alah.

After getting married in the U.S., we came back and settled in Yerushalayim. It wasn't easy, but no one promised me a life of roses. All we had was the shirts on our backs, no money and no "P.H.D." (Papa has Dough). I knew that Chazal say that Eretz Yisroel is only acquired through *yissurim* (by the way, Torah and *Olam Haba* as well are acquired through *yissurim*), so I decided to accept these *yissurim* with *simcha*!

Both of us were at a tremendous distance from parents and family, without the support that many young couples have. We really missed our family, but we did put in a lot of effort to make it here and build our own home by ourselves. We did have, though, the love and help of the Kamenitz *rosh yeshivah* and his wife, and of our dear aunt and uncle. As time went on, we also made many new friends. To quote Dovid HaMelech, Yerushalayim is the city "*shechubera lah yachdav*"—that makes all Yidden friends.

Throughout the years there were financial ups and downs. In one of the financially difficult periods, my husband, who had meanwhile received *semichah*, was offered a respectable rabbinic position in Providence with a high salary. It wasn't easy to decline. We did have what to miss in the land we both grew up in, but Yerushalayim won out.

I think it was our firm resolve, perseverance, determination, and will power that brought about the tremendous *siyatta diShmaya* that allowed us to fulfill our dream. *Boruch HaShem* and *bechasdei HaShem*, today we own a spiritual empire! *Bli ayin hara*, we built four generations here in Eretz Yisroel—children, grandchildren and a slew of great-grandchildren—all *chareidim liD'var HaShem*, *bonei Torah*, and all living in beautiful homes purchased here. They all have a *chelka* in Eretz Yisroel.

It all happened here in Eretz Yisroel, from scratch! HaShem saw we had the will and He did all the rest! We are very ordinary people, nothing special, so if we did it, you certainly can too.




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### *“Ani Ma’amin” — My Beliefs*

*These are the beliefs that got me to decide, over fifty years ago—as an eighteen-year-old—that I was coming to live in Eretz Yisroel.*

*Without going into the essence of the mitzvah of yishuv Eretz Yisroel, and of the practical pros and cons, I firmly believe that Eretz Yisroel is the safest place in the world to live in.*

*Why? Because the Torah says that this is the Land which HaShem’s “eyes” are always on, throughout the whole year.*

*Is this not enough of a guarantee for me to be satisfied? What safer place in the world can there be?*

*Also, I firmly believe that Moshiach can come any day. I surely do not want to get caught up in the rush hour when throngs of Yidden from all over the world will be trying to come here to Eretz Yisroel when Moshiach arrives.*

*I want to be settled here before Moshiach comes! I want to have enough time to get dressed in my best to greet him and be able to absorb the highlight of the most magnificent moment of the world’s existence.*

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## FOR LIVING JEWS, TOO!

Gedaliah O., Old City, Yerushalayim

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My family immigrated to Eretz Yisroel when I was seven years old. We were a regular *frum* American *balebatish* family from Manhattan. My parents had lived here eighteen years earlier for a very short while, while volunteering on a *kibbutz*.

A year before we moved, we came to Eretz Yisroel on a pilot trip. At some of the American families we stayed by, the children did not speak any English. My father would never forget that, and he made it a rule that in our house we'd only speak English.

Before leaving America, my parents hired a tutor to teach me some Hebrew. He taught me maybe thirty words. Though it was of some assistance to me, it was still quite difficult when I arrived here.

When I started school in Eretz Yisroel, I had no idea what was going on. After a while, I started having some minor social issues there, so I transferred to another school. I had a few friends there and attended *ulpan* [school for learning the Hebrew language].

We had started out in a *merkaz klitah* (absorption center) in Mevaseret Tzion near Yerushalayim. We then moved to permanent housing in the town of Kochav Yaakov. It is considered a Torani town, meaning that the people there are Torah observant, though from various backgrounds and sects, ranging from Dati-Leumi (National Religious) to Chareidi. Across the road is the entirely Chareidi town of Tel Tzion. Today there are many children from Kochav Yaakov that attend the institutions there—but that was built only several years later. I started attending a Dati-Leumi school in nearby Maale Michmash.

Though by the time we moved I had already completed third grade, the principal of the new school suggested I join their school's third grade, since it was a small class with only seven other children.

If I would have gone to fourth grade, I would have been in a much larger class with twenty kids. This choice served me well. Additionally, because my new *rebbe* was extremely dedicated to his job, I was so successful. He basically didn't know any English, and I knew very little Hebrew, yet within a month I was filling out the *biurei millim* (word explanations) worksheet with simple Hebrew instead of translating it all into English, thanks to his determination.

After a year in *yeshivah ketanah*, I was having some difficulty in integrating into the surrounding society, so I went back to America to learn in the Yeshivah of Bayonne. I also wanted some secular studies, and this way I got them in a Chareidi environment. In the U.S., I skipped to a higher grade, as the level in Eretz Yisroel is higher. I had an older brother that learned there, and I have a married sister who lives in Brooklyn where I would go for an off-Shabbos. My parents had kept a business in the States, so they would fly in occasionally and I would get to see them. They would also fly every Sukkos to my grandparents in Phoenix, and I would join them from Bayonne. Some of my *hashkafah* as well as my Chareidi attire has stuck with me from my time in Bayonne.

After finishing high school in Bayonne, I came back to Eretz Yisroel and attended a small *yeshivah* until I got married. I then started learning in R' Nechemia Kaplan's *yeshivah*.

For the first year of marriage, we lived in the Sanhedriya neighborhood of Yerushalayim. We then moved to Maaleh HaZeitim, where we lived for the next five years.

Maaleh HaZeitim is a cluster of small Jewish neighborhoods on Har HaZeisim. In addition to hosting the famous Jewish cemetery, there are a lot of Arabs around—some not so very friendly—so I would keep a small stone in my pocket. However, in the course of five years I never ended up having to use it even once. The Jewish presence in the area has greatly reduced the rampant vandalism to Jewish tombstones that was once a normalcy.

In addition to being the resting place of many great *tzaddikim*, the Har HaZeisim cemetery is also a reminder of the time when people would come to Eretz Yisroel to spend their last days here. Today, B”H, Eretz Yisroel is a place for living Jews and for Jewish living, too!

The country has advanced immensely over the past 25 years. Besides for the *gashmiyus* side of things—new roads, highways, trains, technology, etc—there are hundreds of *yeshivos*; various learning programs like Avos U’Vanim and “Yeshivas Mordechai HaTzaddik” [the Purim learning program] are very popular here. Although it is much more acceptable for Chareidim to work than it was thirty years ago, there are not less people learning because of that, considering the immense Chareidi population growth.

There are Chareidi programs for learning trades and for *frum* people who want to earn degrees. The country accommodates accreditation from other countries; it is a process to get the accreditation recognized, but it is doable. I have a sister-in-law who was licensed to be a nurse in the US, took a test here, and she is now a nurse in Eretz Yisroel.

I find Eretz Yisroel has an enjoyable “homey” Jewish feel—people walking around with *tallisos* and sometimes *tefillin*, the Shabbos siren going off at candle-lighting time, a lot of *simchahs* and other Jewish activities all make up this wonderful atmosphere where Jewish people and Jewish living are valued.





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### ***Economics Observation***

*I remember overhearing a conversation between my sister and sister-in-law, one of whom lives in Eretz Yisroel and the other who is still in chutz laAretz. They were discussing the financial differences between both places.*

*Their bottom line was that it could be the same game in either place for a standard family to make the effort to make ends meet. While one of them made quite a respectable living in the US, after tuition for four kids, maintenance for two cars, housing, and other expenses, not much remained. The one in Eretz Yisroel was earning less than a quarter the amount but was also spending exponentially less on education—and the tremendously lower cost of medical care, a wedding, a bris, or kiddush also cannot be compared.*

*There really isn't more money in the US because it's also needed much more. When there is a bit left over, it goes much further here.*

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## PAVING THE WAY

Yehuda Orzel, Givat HaMoreh, Afula

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I am the youngest of eight siblings. We all grew up in England, and all of us ended up here in Eretz Yisroel for a few years of married life. That was the original plan—to be in this environment conducive to *shteiging* for a few of the formative years of life.

Most of my siblings had managed to make it here for at least two to three years before heading back to England. Finding that Yerushalayim was prohibitively expensive for a *kollel* couple, we had to think of an out-of-the-box solution for the longer term. Although we were still keeping two days of Yom Tov, we weren't quite ready to leave Eretz Yisroel.

The new Litvish community in Givat HaMoreh, Afula, was the unlikely candidate. At the time we joined, there were about a hundred and fifty families, who, for the most part, were Israeli. The few English families that were there were mostly related to each other (and not to us), but it meant that there were enough people from a background similar to ours so as not to feel totally isolated. There were also a few Americans, as well as some English-speaking children of Anglo immigrants to Eretz Yisroel. Being that the Israeli members of the *kehillah*—almost all young couples like ourselves—were also far from their hometowns and “natural habitats,” they were more open to create new relationships with people a bit different from themselves, like us *chutznikim*. This was true even in regards to my wife, who at the time we came could barely speak in Hebrew.

Although the environment in Afula meant moving quite a bit out of our comfort zone, one thing that brought us here was the prospect of taking part in the creation of a new *kehillah* in Eretz Yisroel. That wouldn't have been enough to make us stay, though—it took a while even here until we quit Yom Tov Sheini. Both my wife and I had al-

most all our family back in England, so we didn't have any of the natural physical and emotional support that comes with living near family. We were basically staking it out alone in the wilderness, at least in the beginning.

Being a small community with most members not having family close by, this fostered an environment of mutual care and responsibility. This made up to some degree for the lack of family living close by. Having people around us who care about us was definitely a cause in the eventual shift to the realization that we are here to stay. This was in addition to the fact that the affordable housing here meant it was possible for us to seriously consider purchasing a home here, which would surely make our connection to this place much stronger.

Having lived here for about three years, we have come to appreciate our neighborhood and community. Members of the *kehillah* live peacefully with the surroundings, including traditional and not-yet observant neighbors, with some of them becoming inspired by the *kiddush HaShem* we make as *frum* Yidden and decent people. The unfortunate occurrence of cars driving on Shabbos is not uncommon, considering we do live in a mixed neighborhood, but it is considerably less than what may sometimes be seen at the edges of some Chareidi neighborhoods of Yerushalayim, as this is a quiet neighborhood.

As far as *chinuch* is concerned, the local Chareidi *cheider* and school caters to a wide spectrum of backgrounds, including the diversity of the "Litvish" *kehillah* itself, which includes *bnei Torah* who are Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Teimanim, and a bit of Chasidish-oriented as well, and both Israelis and *chutznikim*. The Chareidi populace of the general area, many of whom also attend these schools, includes also a few Chassidim as well as Sephardic *baalei batim*, which are very common to come across in these areas. The exposure to children from the homes of *y're'ei Shomayim* from

all different Chareidi backgrounds is, I think, an added benefit to the high scholastic standards of the schools.

After we settled here, others have considered following our path. My wife has a friend who eventually moved here with her husband, both originally from England, and I think it was much easier for them to make the move following our example. Of course, we also benefited from their move as it meant having more people around us with whom we more closely identify, who speak the same language as we do, and share a similar mentality with us. We have a cousin from England who joined us here as well, and having us as cousins here already must have been a factor in their decision as well.

The *kehillah* now numbers about three-hundred families, *bli ayin hara*, *kein yirbu*, and although it seems that the *kehillah* will definitely stay a predominantly Israeli one, there is definitely room for us *chutznikim* who want to join and be a part.

Although in the beginning we had to move a bit out of our comfort zone, it has become our very own zone, and we are quite content with it—our own little piece of Eretz Yisroel.




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### ***Why Didn't We Know About This?***

*One of the chutznik families here in Givat HaMoreh manage an apartment here that is rented out for weekends and short-term to vacationers.*

*A friend of mine was planning on terminating his stay in Eretz Yisroel, as it was just too expensive for him to stay being an avreich here. He decided to end his stay here with a weekend vacation, and rented that apartment for a Shabbos.*

*After being exposed to the warm and fully functional kehillah here, and realizing that there were more English families here than only my own, he told me that it just never occurred to him that such communities existed where he would be able to afford staying here as an avreich. He was mistakenly comparing the finances of chutz laAretz to only Yerushalayim and its surroundings.*

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## JUMPING RIGHT IN—TO LIVE THE LIFE WE WANTED

Avraham Pollack, Immanuel

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Ten years ago, when I was forty-five years old, we decided we're just going to jump in and make the move. For many years, we knew that we were headed to live in Eretz Yisroel, but for practical reasons it just hadn't happened. If we would have continued taking into consideration every one of the practicalities, we might have ended up staying in the US indefinitely. So, with just six thousand dollars in cash and without any work planned, we packed up our house and got ready to go. We received funding to transport a container of our goods and joined a Nefesh B'Nefesh charter flight.

I was already learning half-days with *chavrusos*, but in the small community of Charleston, South Carolina, which we lived in at the time, there was no *kollel* setup for those like me who would be interested in learning with a group. We looked into other communities that had such options, but we instead decided that if we were already going to move, what we really wanted was to be in Eretz Yisroel. My wife constantly said, "For two thousand years we have davened and cried for the ability to live in Eretz Yisroel, and now we can just get on a plane, and in a few hours' time, we'll be there—and even the ticket is paid for...." Though our two older children were teenagers already, they had grown up with the idea that Eretz Yisroel is the place for us to be.

As part of our preparations, I did my research and found a *kollel* in Yerushalayim that would be suitable for me. For the first seven years in Eretz Yisroel, I was learning in *kollel* full-time. Half of the funds we needed for our eight-thousand-shekel monthly budget (to cover all expenses including rent for our family of five), came in the form of financial support from abroad. During this time, people were coming to me in order to help sort out their conflicts, which I would

do on a volunteer basis. I had experience in the field, as I was doing negotiations for my business when we had lived in the US. My wife suggested I study to become certified and turn this hobby into a *par-nassah*. I am now practicing as a certified mediator, mostly working in the evenings.

We first lived in Cheftsiba, a neighborhood of Modi'in Illit near Kiryat Sefer, for about nine years. Though my wife is an engineer by training, she hadn't worked in the field for many years. Originally from Switzerland but having lived in the US, she spoke both German and English. One day she saw an advertisement in one of the local bulletins looking for a German or English speaker for a kitchen-design company. She said, if they are looking for an English or German speaker, they really want a German speaker but will take someone who speaks English. That turned out to be the case. Now, for almost eight years B"H, my wife has been running a successful kitchen design business.

About two years ago we moved to the rapidly growing community of Immanuel. Today there are over a thousand families spanning all age groups, though most of the newcomers are young couples. They include Ashkenazim, Sephardim, and Teimanim—both those who identify as mainstream Chareidi as well as some Chardal. The Ashkenazim in Immanuel are predominantly Chassidish, but there is a small and growing Litvish *kehillah* as well. A sizable percentage of the residents are English speakers. There is an acceptance committee under the auspices of the community *rabbonim* to assure that newcomers are suitable for the community and that the community is fitting for them.

Residents place tremendous emphasis on educating their children, and there are a number of different schools. Lately, there has been talk about opening a Litvish *yeshivah ketanah* (high school), which would take advantage of the quieter small-town setting more conducive to learning. People here are constantly working on enhancing

their spiritual growth, and they value a pure and idealistic life. The community is known for its warmth, for excelling in *chessed*, and for *emunah*.

The city hall works together with *rabbonim* from all the *kehillos*. There are special activities and *chugim* for the benefit of the children and all residents, as well as a community library and swimming pool. There is a small shopping center and many small home-run businesses.

Housing is affordable with prices starting at about 600,000 shekels for a 2-bedroom apartment and there are many other options available including private villas. There is considerable construction underway.

A little more than an hour drive to Yerushalayim and under an hour from Bnei Brak, we have here in Immanuel a city full of fresh air and breathtaking views. There is also a walkway surrounding the entire city with a beautiful view of the surrounding mountains and the neighboring communities nestled within them, the streams, waterfalls and the wildlife.

The future is here! Come join us!

p.s. More information about Immanuel is available on the website I have put together at <http://emanuelcity.home.blog>.





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### ***Affordable Housing—with Yerushalayim Still Within Reach***

*There was no way you could have convinced me that we weren't going to live in Yerushalayim, but after we went every day for the first two weeks there to look for apartments within our budget, we realized that it would be just impossible for us.*

*We had heard from an acquaintance that their daughter was living in Modi'in Illit and paying only 1400 shekels a month for rent. (Now ten years later, as Modi'in Illit has developed to a full-fledged and bustling city, rent has gone up almost threefold!) We figured we could do the same, and with the money saved on rent, we could buy a car, which would get me to kollel in Yerushalayim, about a half-hour commute. Now, from Immanuel, it's just a bit over an hour drive (if I don't want to stay and learn in Immanuel).*

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## FROM AMERICA TO HASHEM'S BACKYARD

Yosef Sholom Rabin, Sha'arei Chesed, Yerushalayim

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I was born and raised in the “Goldene Medineh” (*lehavdil!*), America, and spent most of my years in Passaic, NJ. For seven years I was *zocheh* to absorb myself in the amazing Torah environment of Yeshivas Talmidei Telz in Riverdale, NY, after which I came to learn in Eretz Yisroel by R' Meir Soloveitchik, *zt”l*. *Toras Brisk* and an emphasis on “*tiffeh* (deep) *lomdus*” were definitely a big part of my day back then, playing a significant role in my “Eretz Yisroel *yeshivah* experience.” Today I am married with two kids, *bli ayin hara*, studying Israeli law, and also *koveia itim laTorah* to the best of my ability, happily living in Yerushalayim Ir HaKodesh.

My family had been coming to Eretz Yisroel for the Shalosh Regalim for a number of years and the decision for me to live permanently in Eretz Yisroel was somewhat natural. B”H I met my wonderful wife here and have been married and living here happily ever since. Obviously, it takes time getting used to the somewhat aggressive (and what can sometimes appear as obnoxious) Israeli culture, but I feel that there’s nothing more special than having the opportunity to live in the “*Eretz asher Einei HaShem Elokecha bah meireishis hashanah v’ad acharis shanah*,” or in other words, “HaShem’s backyard.” For thousands of years Yidden from all corners of the world davened to return to Eretz Yisroel, and B”H we have merited to see these *tefillos* come to fruition in our times. The Seven Nevu’os of Nechamah take on a new and more palpable meaning as we witness the growth and tremendous *hatzlachah* of the Jewish people in Eretz Yisroel with our very own eyes.

The truth is that I had “life easy” with regards to some of the challenges *chutznikim* face when coming to Eretz Yisroel, but I can still relate to some of them on various levels and have B”H been active in

helping to find solutions. The main problems everyone talks about is the lack of “normal *chinuch*,” finding jobs (especially for the women with regards to *kollel yungerleit*), and affordable housing within a warm *kehillah*.

As for housing, we’ve recently been looking seriously into moving to a Chareidi *yishuv* and have been specifically interested in a place called Meitzad, which is about forty minutes from Yerushalayim by car and twenty minutes from Beitar. There is a wonderful *cheider* and developing Beis Yaakov there, but what attracted us most was the feeling of being in a somewhat “remote location” (not really, just feels like it), far from the hustle and bustle of the city, the large and spacious geographical setting, and the amazing views of Midbar Yehudah (the Judean Desert). Furthermore, unless you go two or three hours up north or down south, nothing can beat the prices there and the size of the properties as well.

The language barrier can make everything exceedingly more difficult, but from my experience, once you’ve decided to “jump in” and “become Israeli,” conquering Ivrit is somewhat less terrifying. The fact that for many, their immediate family is almost three thousand miles away is also very challenging, but B”H with technology today, connecting overseas has become a lot easier. Still, nothing can replace having your *shver* and *shvigger* around the corner or spending a family Shabbos together without having to think twice. Baruch HaShem, I’m *zocheh* to have both (almost), but I have many friends who suffer from this issue daily. When asked about these problems I often respond that Chazal say “*Eretz Yisroel nikneis beyissurim*” and *halevay* that these are my only *yissurim*. Yes, coming to Eretz Yisroel to PERMANENTLY LIVE HERE—not for a vacation, not for Yarchei Kallah, and not even for a year or two of *yeshivah*—is definitely a *nisayon*. But while *nisyonos* can be difficult, aggravating and very taxing, they also help us grow and inspire us to achieve more. The word *nisayon* shares the same *shoresh* as the word *nes* (miracle)

and *lehisnoses*—to “lift up.” When we rise to the occasion and exert our “superhuman” *kochos*, HaShem makes miracles for us as well and shows us the path to *hatzlachah*.

Of course, there is so much to see and experience in Eretz Yisroel from a geographical and historical perspective as well. From the beautiful Golan Heights down to the sun scorched Eilat, Eretz Yisroel is filled with breathtaking views, Jewish history and archeology soaked into its very essence. The *mesirus nefesh* of our ancestors and Jewish brethren is firmly planted in the Land and serves as a powerful source of inspiration to help us understand our unique *tafkid* here.

Whether it's the taxi driver who mentions Shem HaShem every third word, the receipts that say Chag Same'ach, and just the overall experience of seeing Jews from all backgrounds coming home after so many years in *galus*, something about Eretz Yisroel continues to tickle my *neshamah* and demand ever higher levels of *avodas HaShem*, bonding with Klal Yisroel and true *Tikkun Olam be-Malchus Sh-dai*. May it be the Will of HaShem that all of Klal Yisroel merit to fulfill this wondrous *mitzvah* of living and truly thriving in Eretz Yisroel, and may we then merit the coming of Moshiach and the Geulah Sheleimah *bekarov*!




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### ***Creating a Voice for Chutznikim***

*One confusing “headache” for chutznikim is understanding the political scene (or mess) here in Eretz Yisroel.... In contrast to America, politics could actually have a direct impact on people’s day-to-day lives, so it is somewhat more important to pay attention to things. I think that American Chareidim in Eretz Yisroel could definitely help advance the general agenda of the Chareidi tzibbur here. They can also help create a voice for the unique needs of the slightly different chutznik mentality.*

*As a member of an organization called Kedushas Tzion, working towards bringing the government closer to Torah values and halachah is, to me, a particularly meaningful part of our goal. The more we can strengthen and broaden the influence of the Chareidi community here, the closer it will be to becoming a reality.*

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## LIVING IN ERETZ YISROEL

Bashi Rosen, Har Nof, Yerushalayim

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If you had told me fifteen years ago that in 2019 I'd be living with my husband and six children, *bli ayin hara*, in an old three-bedroom Yerushalmi apartment with no car, I would have laughed in your face. Coming from suburban America with two to three-story houses, one car per driver in the family, and a normal American life-style, I could never have pictured spending the rest of my life living on a *kollel* budget in Yerushalayim. I lived a whole ten days as a married adult in America, so I really can't compare based on my own personal experiences. What I can share with you is how I fell in love with Eretz Yisroel and Yerushalayim in particular, and why after almost eleven years I can't imagine moving back to the US.

My mother-in-law constantly reminds us of the original plan to go to Eretz Yisroel, learn for a few years, come back, receive *semichah* and a psychology degree, and maybe go into *kiruv* or something to that effect. Neither my husband nor I am sure exactly how it happened. We came for ten months, were *zocheh* to have our first child, moved out of a shoebox and into a larger apartment, and the "it's time to go home" conversation never came up. After our third or fourth child was born, we realized that the conversation never came up because we were already home.

Until you've experienced it yourself, it's impossible to fully describe the way Yiddishkeit is an active part of daily life in Eretz Yisroel, and especially in Yerushalayim. The country, even summer activities, revolve around the Jewish calendar. One hears the music playing throughout the city on Erev Shabbos, listens as the siren announces that Shabbos is starting, watches as the streets empty as it gets closer to Shabbos, and then enjoys the noisy laughter as the kids play in the street all Shabbos long. Also, one knows that the big

theme parks and water parks will have separate days for men and women during *Bein Hazmanim*. When one sees the city covered in *sukkos*, and with the *arba minim* and *sukkah* decorations sold on every corner, it brings such a sense of warmth and joy. In December, the lampposts are decked out in lights and Menorahs as opposed to trees and Xmas decorations. Two weeks before Pesach, why is that ten-year-old dragging a huge log down the street? Oh right, it's getting close to Lag BaOmer. What's that music I hear? The kids all run outside to join yet another *hachnasas sefer Torah*, a common, joyful occurrence on the Har Nof streets.

I feel so blessed to be raising my kids in Eretz Yisroel, where they are growing up in a Jewish country, surrounded by a *frum* environment and minimal physical needs. Tuition prices are great here. Schooling for the girls is basically free and the boys' tuition is only about \$80 a month. My children's mother tongue is Hebrew, which means that they are learning HaShem's Torah in their native language. Torah is taught to them with such a *geshmak*—it's beautiful! The girls get a double curriculum, though the boys basically just get *limudei kodesh*. We've supplemented to fill in the gaps that are important to us. I love the fact that the younger kids are off in the afternoons. I'm blessed to be working from home on a flexible schedule, so I get to spend quality time with the kids on a daily basis.

The neighborhoods are havens for kids. Schools and communities offer a variety of enjoyable after-school programming and activities for the kids. These could include programs such as sports teams, arts, music, and others. Concerts and puppet shows are arranged for all the big vacations and even during the school year. When the boys come home after a long day of learning, the lobbies turn into soccer fields and the sidewalks are their bike paths. Within a five-minute walk from my apartment there are four large parks and so much space to play jump rope, hopscotch, and any other game the kids can dream up.

Israeli kids are super independent. By the age of eight, my kids run over to the supermarket to get ice cream and can go to the candy store all by themselves (all of which happen to be across the street). Being that the schools here are all within walking distance, it's quite common for the older children to pick-up/drop-off the younger children, which is helpful if you don't have a car.

Coming from an out-of-town community, it took me a while to adjust to having sixteen families living in my building, thousands of *frum* people living on my block, and tens of thousands in my community. After a bit of time though, I developed my own community. On a daily basis, my neighbors and I borrow and return items, whether it be food, last minute baking supplies, clothes, baby Tylenol for the grandchildren who came to visit, or even the last-minute bathing cap for a school swim trip.

Aside from the fact that you can now get most American products in Eretz Yisroel, I've also found that like any diet, after time on that diet you lose your craving for the forbidden foods. I'm no longer craving or even needing extra padded Q-Tips or three-ply toilet paper. Through living a less *gashmiyusdik* life in Eretz Yisroel, you're really *zocheh* to see the shining light of HaShem and the *ruchniyus* involved in your daily life.





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### *Snowstorm Weekend*

*About five years ago in Yerushalayim, there was a huge snowstorm on a Thursday. The entire city shut down. Right across the street from our building is a large supermarket. The workers could not get home, so they slept in the store that night, which was amazing for us, as they were one of the few stores in the whole city that was open on Erev Shabbos. No cars could get out because, unlike America, Eretz Yisroel gets so few large snowstorms that it's not worth the money to invest in snowplows. Eventually, they used some tanks to clear the main roads. So, on that Friday, many of my neighbors were totally homebound. Being elderly, they could not brave the walk across the street in over a foot of snow. My sweet neighbor made challah for every family in the whole building so that they would all have challah for Shabbos! Another neighbor had a sefer Torah, so all the residents in the building davened together for all of the Shabbos tefillos without needing to venture outdoors. It was a very special, only-in-Eretz Yisroel type of weekend!*

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## AN INVESTMENT THAT PAYS OFF

Avraham Shusteris, Ramat Beit Shemesh

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As a Jew, I always felt that Eretz Yisroel is where I belong. It is where I would want to raise my children, and it is where I feel that I can live even a simple and mundane life with a purpose. It's a place where a Jew can reach his full potential.

I got married in my wife's hometown of Montreal, and started off after in Monsey, NY. We had been considering immigrating to Eretz Yisroel for several years and always had an excuse to push the idea off, with each push-off amounting to another delay. Eventually we concluded that unless we just took the leap, we would always find a reason to procrastinate.

I remember that before I became a *baal teshuvah*, I always knew that I wanted to keep Shabbos and live an authentic Jewish life, but I wasn't ready just yet. It was a goal and an ideal that I didn't think was practical for the immediate future, though it was something that I knew was the right thing to do and something that I hoped to achieve at some point in the future. Once I eventually became observant, moving to Eretz Yisroel took on the same characteristics. I knew that was where I was meant to be as a Jew, but I didn't think it was a practical target for the immediate future and was more of a long term goal that I kept kicking down the road.

The same inner voice that told me that Torah was *emes*, also told me that Eretz Yisroel is where I am meant to live. I didn't have much support from my immediate circle of friends and family when I became *frum*, so I wasn't discouraged when I did not receive any support from my friends and mentors in my community when I told them that I wanted to move to Eretz Yisroel.

When I approached people for advice about moving to Eretz Yisroel, each one gave his own reason why it wasn't practical. One per-

son told me that it would be hard to find *parnassah* and that giving up a great job in NY would be irresponsible. Another said that moving would be hard on the kids and I would be risking having them go off the *derech*. Yet another suggested that the language barrier would be too difficult to maneuver—would my wife be able to find a job—and would I find a community and *rav* that would be suitable for my unique needs? Although with everyone pointing to a specific issue without concern for the others, it seemed that there was no one universally accepted reason not to move.

I didn't take these concerns lightly. I decided that I would do the proper *hishtadlus* and try to tackle each one of these issues on its own. It took many phone calls, pilot trips, and research, but ultimately, I did enough research to feel comfortable that we were making the right decision.

As part of our research, we contacted several families who had recently moved from Monsey to Ramat Beit Shemesh to get their advice and learn from their experiences. This was an extremely helpful experience, which led me to initiate the Naava Kodesh volunteer network, connecting Americans who dream of living in Eretz Yisroel with those who originate from their hometowns and have established themselves in the various Torah communities here in Eretz Yisroel. The Naava Kodesh volunteers offer advice, support, and guidance. Besides for Monsey, there are volunteers from a host of other cities including Lakewood, Baltimore, Passaic, and Queens. Getting advice from people who share a common language, lifestyle and profession is essential to properly understand the different options available here for community, education, and *parnassah*.

We worked with various governmental agencies to allow my wife to transfer her American nursing degree. We made two pilot trips, in which we met with several different schools that we thought might be suitable for our children, and lined up several job interviews for ourselves to see what the job market was like. We had many meet-

ings with real estate agents to find apartment rentals. We met with *rabbonim* from the relevant communities and got valuable advice about schools, the specific areas in Ramat Beit Shemesh we were interested in hearing about, and more.

Even after all of these efforts, I still faced significant *nisyonos*. A few months before we were to move, I was given significant financial incentive to stay, while simultaneously having to deal with the threat of losing a significant portion of my life savings if I were to make the move. This would have left me almost completely broke. I came to the realization that if I really wanted to move here, I would have to take a leap of faith that things would work out. Baruch HaShem, they did. With HaShem's help, the heavy investment we made in research paid off, and our move was very smooth.

Though from late afternoon until midnight I work as an accountant for a US company, my day here in Ramat Beit Shemesh starts with learning at Yeshivas HaGra. They have learning programs that cater to varied levels of experience in a warm and welcoming, friendly yet structured environment. The time I spend at this *yeshivah* has really become the highlight of my personal *aliyah* experience. The combination of a fantastic, brilliant, and encouraging *rebbe*, a great *chavrusa*, and a friendly *chaburah*, make it the perfect place for me.



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### *Pleasantly Surprised*

*I was surprised by the amount of local job opportunities in accounting for myself and in nursing for my wife. I was surprised at how helpful many of the locals were to new immigrants, specifically via the local online groups. I was surprised at how quickly my children adapted to both the language and the culture in their schools. I was surprised at how smooth the transition was in comparison to the horror stories I heard from people back in the States who urged me to reconsider our move.*

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## FINDING OUR PLACE IN ERETZ YISROEL

Aryeh and Shoshana Weinberg, Ma'aleh Amos

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In 1996, while we were in our late thirties, we moved from Baltimore to Eretz Yisroel with our six children aged sixteen down to one and a half.

Although many *rabbonim* do not recommend moving to Eretz Yisroel with children from ages eight through high school, we came with the blessing of our *rav* in Baltimore, Rav Mendel Feldman, *zt"l*.

We spent our first year in an absorption center in Mevaseret Tzion (just outside Yerushalayim), with no idea of where we would eventually settle. This temporary setup (which no longer exists there) enabled us to: live rent-free for the first half year; attend *ulpan*, with a free daycare on the premises; and send our children to schools in nearby Telz-Stone and Yerushalayim. Additionally, it gave us the opportunity to see many communities around the country, which was thanks to trips organized by the absorption center and by Tehilla (an organization that conducted pilot trips, organized field trips in search of communities, and provided emotional support to new religious immigrants in the days before Nefesh B'Nefesh). Moreover, we had the opportunity to meet many other new immigrants with whom we could exchange information about job and community searches and give and receive emotional support.

We discovered Ma'aleh Amos by taking rides with other absorption center residents who were looking at various communities. Many aspects of Ma'aleh Amos appealed to us.

The small size classes in the Beis Yaakov and Talmud Torah elementary schools were five to ten students on average. This was wonderful compared to the class sizes in Yerushalayim of up to forty students. Also, the fact that school was about a two-minute walk from home was appealing.

The relatively inexpensive cost of housing was also appealing. We first rented a four-bedroom home, and then eventually built our current home in the empty lot next-door, as part of a project that included eight homes, for a fraction of rental and sale prices in Yerushalayim.

We also appreciated the small and intimate community with only about fifty families at the time. The *rav*, HaRav Z'ev Wolf Charlop, *shlita*, who is English-speaking, is an approachable *talmid chacham* who understood the issues faced by American immigrants. (Having an accessible *rav* was always of primary importance to us). Many of the families here were also immigrants from the U.S. or from the former U.S.S.R. Since we were all without family, we became each other's family and support system. Even the Israeli families did not have family nearby, so they became part of this support system as well.

Ma'aleh Amos is an easy commute to Yerushalayim. It is about a half-hour drive to Gilo at the southern end of Yerushalayim, or about a one-hour bus ride to the city's main entrance. When we moved here, my husband worked in a high-tech park in Yerushalayim, which made for a very reasonable commute for him.

Ma'aleh Amos is in a quiet area where the Judean Hills and the Judean Desert meet. It has a remarkable view of the Yam HaMelach and the mountains of Jordan. We see a lot of sky here. The amazing view, the quiet, and the feeling of being in nature and not in a congested city was very appealing to us. During a simple walk in the *yishuv* (small settlement), we can see sheep on the nearby hills, sometimes a family of camels, and many other interesting animals and plants. The quiet, calm, and small-town atmosphere is very conducive to *ruchniyus* growth through participation in *yishuv* life and having time to learn, whether in *shiurim*, with a *chavrusa*, or on your own. We don't have all the conveniences of the city, but on the other hand, we do not have to deal with a hectic and urban pace of life. As

I tell other people, the only time people rush here is to catch the bus—because the next one won't be leaving for several hours.

We also liked the fact that there were enough English-speaking families for us to feel comfortable. At the same time, we did not want to live in an American “bubble,” but rather in a *yishuv* that operates in Hebrew, so that we and our children would pick up Hebrew quickly and befriend people of various nationalities.

*Boruch HaShem*, we felt comfortable here from the very first day—our children were already playing with neighbors their age while the movers were still unloading the moving truck!

Just a brief postscript on our employment: Aryeh is a CPA who currently works for Roth & Co., a *frum* NY-based accounting firm that recently opened up an auditing office in Yerushalayim. (They're looking for more accountants.) I am a freelance translator, working from home.



### ***Finding Work***

*Just as HaShem supplied Bnei Yisroel with all their needs in the desert, He has taken care of our parnassah needs here—in the middle of nowhere!*

*Several people from our area work in schools and day-care centers either in the local mosdos, in nearby yishuvim, or in Gush Etzion, Beitar, or Yerushalayim. They are teachers, rebbeim or assistants in the Beis Yaakovs, Talmud Torahs or preschools.*

*A few are employed by the yishuv in various positions, mostly part-time, in the capacity of handyman/gardener, secretary, klita (absorption) coordinator, youth directors, librarian, post office administrator, community coordinator, cultural and activity coordinators, security director, and cleaning the schools, offices and mikvaos.*

*Some work from home as architects and interior designers, by running businesses from their home, or in other types of work for companies with American hours.*

*Two residents are bus drivers. One resident owns and operates the makolet (grocery store) with the help of some part-time cashiers who fill in when he is not available.*

*Several new residents work in Yerushalayim, Beitar or in various Gush Etzion communities as medical or other secretaries, in stores, government offices, or in security positions.*

*Some women operate their own day care or preschool programs in their homes or in public buildings here, or work in day-care centers here or in nearby yishuvim. Several sofrim work locally, and one resident has a batim business for tefillin.*

*Some are independently employed, including a construction contractor and a painter.*

*Two male residents are nurses in Yerushalayim. Some people work part-time as chugim leaders for exercise or crafts classes, here or in other communities. There's really something for everyone.*

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## SOUL CONNECTION

R' Pinchas Winston, Telz-Stone

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When I came to learn at a *yeshivah* in Yerushalayim in 1982, it was only for a year. At that time, the Land was still quite foreign to me, as I was used to life back in Canada. I was just more comfortable living on the other side of the ocean.

That quickly changed over the course of the year, and I had come to love being in Eretz Yisroel, becoming more connected to the Land and feeling so much closer to HaShem. It was the place to be Jewish, so I chose to stay here another year—which led to another year. By the fourth year, it was clear to me that I wanted to live in Eretz Yisroel, and I made that clear as well when I started *shidduchim*.

I was married in 1985, and we first rented an apartment in the Old City to be close to my *yeshivah*. I started working part time and learning part time while my wife did some secretarial work for a local hotel. To make additional money, I also helped a rabbi transcribe his classes that he had planned to publish in book form.

In our second year of marriage, we moved to the Har Nof neighborhood in Yerushalayim. Unlike our apartment in the Old City, this one was unfurnished, which presented a problem since we did not have the money to furnish it ourselves. Then came the miracle. Another couple who had decided to return to North America asked us to use their furniture while they were gone so that they didn't have to put it in storage. Their furniture was quality made and included a Maytag washer and dryer. Overnight we had a fully furnished apartment at no cost.

A job opportunity opened up for me in Canada around 1988, which I took in order to make money quickly so I could at least make a deposit on an apartment in Eretz Yisroel. We did not return until 1993, by which time we had purchased a home in a place called

Telz-Stone (about 12 minutes outside of Yerushalayim, off the Tel Aviv-Yerushalayim highway). Originally, I had wanted to live in Yerushalayim, but we were able to get more value for our money in this new area. We have loved it here ever since.

I had part-time teaching jobs while I wrote books on Torah philosophy full time. This would not have been so promising had the Internet not become so available, changing the way people do business. Once upon a time, you had to bring your product to the market. Now you could do that from your home, even thousands of miles away from other people. The market could come to you even if you weren't there. I run an American non-profit organization from my home in Eretz Yisroel, managing everything through the Internet. Thanks to Skype, I can even make low-cost long-distance phone calls.

I have Skyped my parents on a daily basis for many years already, and we can talk to each other face-to-face through our computers. It doesn't replace being together in person, but it is a great second to this. I have remained close to them, learning with them and others over Skype or similar video conferencing platforms, making the distance between us seem quite insignificant. When used properly, technology is a tremendous asset and provides us with so many opportunities. It is far easier to live in Eretz Yisroel today, now that one can still maintain connections that are thousands of miles away.

That's especially important to me, because now when I leave the Land, I am like a fish out of water. I have a soul connection with this Land, and I derive so much life from it. I have a sense of inner peace that I never had living abroad. You don't need the same material things here that you felt you needed while living outside the Land. The sense of personal fulfillment I feel while living here more than compensates for them.

Now, when I see all the construction and improvements being made in the country, it is even more exciting. We may look at this as

the way of any expanding country, but historically it represents more than that. HaShem runs the world and He is behind everything. He seems to be preparing for something great, and I am grateful to be living here as it happens. Though it's not about avoiding struggle, as *yissurim* are part-and-parcel of life everywhere in this world. It's about working hard for the things you value most and keeping the things that matter most to you. For me personally, Eretz Yisroel has been worth every challenge that I have had to deal with while being there, because I am where I believe I need to be and WANT to be.



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### ***The Bottom Line***

*Eventually, I wrote a book about the importance of settling in Eretz Yisroel today. It was really about the centrality of Eretz Yisroel in Torah growth, which points to the importance of at least doing what one can to move here. It was based upon another important sefer called “Tuv HaAretz,” writings from the Arizal about the Land. The bottom line is that HaShem is everywhere, but as the gemara says, this is the place where we connect to Him the best. Learning Torah and performing mitzvos comes alive in Eretz Yisroel, as does the history of the Jewish people. There’s nothing like it anywhere else in the Jewish world.*

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## INSPIRATION AND PURPOSE

Yehoshua Wiseman, Beis Yisroel, Yerushalayim

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The blossoming of this Land of HaShem is a source of inspiration for me. It can be in the fields, by the trees, around the streams of water. It can be of the new Jewish homes being built, both the ones made of brick and mortar and the ones made of a *chosson* and *kallah*. As for the physical homes being built, I recently had the opportunity to say the *brachah* of *Matziv Gevul Almanah* (Who reinstates the border of the widow), said upon seeing a new neighborhood in Eretz Yisroel, with *Sheim* and *Malchus* [HaShem's Name and Kingship—*Elokeinu Melech ha'olam*]. As for the Jewish homes of new *chassanim* and *kallos*—at every wedding here, when “*Od Yishama*” is sung, I practically cry. For some things, we don't need faith here; we can actually witness the fulfillment of age-old prophecies in front of our eyes.

Eretz Yisroel is a Land of *nissim*. Of course, HaShem's *hashgachah* is everywhere, but over here we really feel His hand while being cradled in His embrace. Every Jew who lives here can tell you how they feel and see His *hashgachah* in matters of *chinuch*, *parnassah*, and many other areas. I have personally seen so many miracles here with *parnassah* that they could probably fill an entire book. In this Land of *emunah*, HaShem guides you to find the resources for whatever you need. A reaction to your missing needs might include going to the Kosel to *daven*, saying Tehillim, and singing to HaShem, to help make yourself a *kli* (vessel) for the reception of HaShem's *brachah* and *hashgachah*. If only for that, it would be worthwhile to live here. I also think that because of this closeness to HaShem, people here are happier.

The light of Torah seems to shine much more here. In *chutz laAretz* you may read about Avraham Avinu, but here, you can see where he walked and lived. You can go on a *tiyul* (trip) with the children and trace the footsteps of the personalities from Tanach. I feel there is more

sincerity here. The discussions taking place here are more often about purpose in life and other such elevated subjects.

Yes, there is a strong battle going on here about the essence of Eretz Yisroel and Am Yisroel. Is a *goy* whose grandfather may have been Jewish, which the secular State is often importing to the country, considered a Jew? Is Eretz Yisroel the fertile ground for fulfilling Am Yisroel's national mission of being a *mamleches Kohanim ve'goy kadosh* (holy and priestly nation) and an *ohr la'amim* (light unto the nations)?

Opening the gates for *goyim* is definitely an accursed part of the "Law of Return" of this still secular State, causing a serious problem of intermarriage that it doesn't yet seem to be bothered about. The fact that the law does allow for any Jew to come here is of course a blessing, but it must be utilized by each and every one. Every Torah observant Jew who is here pushes out more of the *sitra achara* [lit. other side; forces of evil]. Every Jew is critical in tipping the scales towards the G-dly enterprise of the supreme dominion and revelation of Torah. This is a great *zechus*, but it's also an obligation. We must be involved not only in our own issues, but also together as a nation in our Heavenly ordained joint enterprise.

A Jew needs *mesirus nefesh* to fight for a stronghold for *kedushah* and for raising the banner of Torah above this Land. Although it is a battle, we have here with us what Dovid HaMelech would say, "*HaShem tzilcha al yad yeminecha*" (HaShem is your shadow on your right hand). We can feel "*ke'ilu amaram Dovid HaMelech*" [as if Dovid HaMelech himself had said those words (from the supplication after recitation of Tehillim)] for our own struggles, as he would for his own.

I've heard people say that if there weren't Jewish philanthropists in America, we would have no *yeshivos* here in Eretz Yisroel. I am sure that if all those people who are keeping the Torah were physically here, they would have much more of an impact on the government's priorities.

Many tourists come visit my painting studio in the Old City. I try to pass my inspiration onto the canvas, with the intent of in turn inspiring

the viewer, whether to aspire to higher levels of *avodas HaShem*, to arouse their love for Eretz Yisroel, or to increase their yearning for the Geulah (Redemption) and for the Beis HaMikdash. I have *goyish* tourists who express interest in the paintings of visibly observant Jews davening in a forest or other such portrayals of authentic Jewish life. Even the *goyim* feel that this is the real thing, the epitome of dignity, the ideal aspiration for *kedushah*. This is the truth about the observant Jew, and it contrasts starkly with the images created by some “outsider” non-observant artists who portray images of old and sad people. Those who keep the Torah are the real and vibrant expression of Jewish life—where is there a more proper place to express it on a national level than in Eretz Yisroel?





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### *Languages*

*When I first came to Eretz Yisroel as a searching college student, I made it a point to immerse myself with Israelis, so I would know how to speak the language and otherwise get along easily here. It was then that I got to see many frum people from up close, something that had not happened in my hometown of Pasadena, California. It did not take too long for me to decide that I would also become observant.*

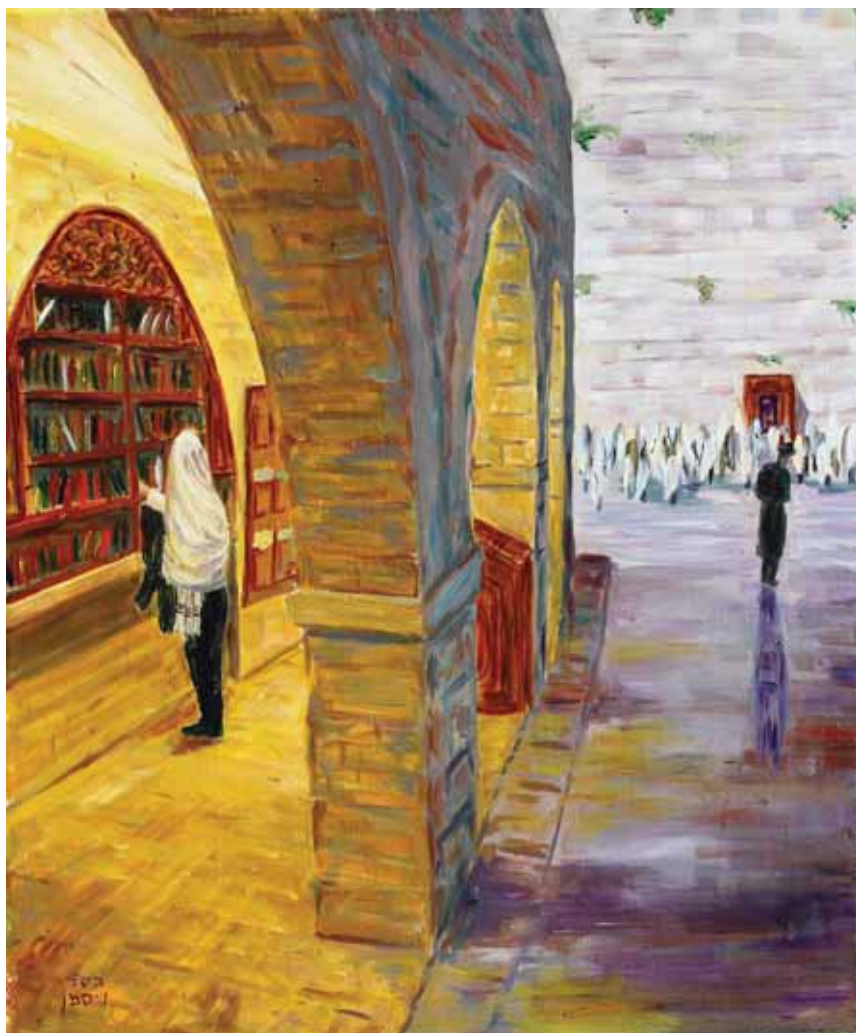
*Although I eventually ended up marrying an Israeli, I try to speak English at home, so my kids can know enough English to get by if they need it, even if they're not fluent in it.*

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## RESOURCES FOR FRUM ENGLISH SPEAKERS

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As a service to those interested in pursuing further research on the practicalities of living in Eretz Yisroel, we have collected information about several organizations known to service the *frum* English-speaking community in Eretz Yisroel. This does not constitute an endorsement for any organization, and we encourage you to do your own research.



## THE PHONE NUMBER YOU NEED TO KNOW

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Avromi\* and Chaya\* were married all of two months when they landed in Ben Gurion Airport this past Rosh Chodesh Elul. Bleary-eyed with exhaustion, they made their way to their new apartment in an unfamiliar neighborhood. Chaya started dusting while Avromi ventured outside to find food and a cell phone plan. When he finally got back two hours later, he found Chaya in extreme pain. With the little knowledge they had, they suspected it was a women's health crisis. Luckily, they had cell phones by then, and they'd had the foresight to come prepared with MDA's number. An ambulance took them to the hospital. They staggered into the ER and took a seat. But they had no knowledge of the language and no idea how to get a nurse's attention; it looked like you needed a secret code just to be noticed!

Suddenly, a friendly looking *frum* woman walked into the emergency room. She was clearly not part of the hospital staff, but she seemed to be looking for someone. Her eyes scanned the crowd until they settled on the bewildered couple. She strode over and said, in English, "I'm from Chaim V'Chessed. We're here to help English speakers in Eretz Yisroel. You look American. Can I help you?"

They nearly cried with relief.

Some newcomers only find out about Chaim V'Chessed the hard way. But Chaim V'Chessed's hotline number – **072-CHESSSED** – is catchy for a reason: every English speaker should memorize it before they step foot in Israel for any length of time.

For over 20 years, Baltimore native Rabbi Paysach Freedman was involved in numerous *tzedakah* and *chessed* initiatives that serviced the English-speaking public in Eretz Yisrael. His work exposed him to a desperate need. Eretz Yisrael was full of *chessed* initiatives, but Anglos did not know what sort of help was available and had other

needs besides. They needed a one-stop, English-speaking organization of their own that would act as a first responder to their challenges or crises, holding their hands and helping them navigate every aspect of real life in Eretz Yisrael.

In 2014, Chaim V'Chessed was conceptualized and planned by a team of *rabbanim* and *askanim*. Under the leadership of Rabbi Freedman, the team identified the areas that were potentially most challenging for English speakers in Eretz Yisrael: medical logistics, hospital navigation, women's health, special education and children's therapies, mental health referrals, bureaucracy, death and bereavement, and geriatrics. By the summer of 2015, Chaim V'Chessed was staffed with experts in every field and opened its doors to the public.

The response was incredible. The calls jumped from ten a day to twenty, then quickly doubled and tripled. Today the organization is handling close to 100 new inquiries each day. Its rapid growth reinforced what a critical need it served to fill. Chaim V'Chessed quickly earned a reputation for warmth, professionalism, and effective responses to situations ranging from the most mundane to literally life threatening.

According to HaRav Nissan Kaplan, longtime *maggid shiur* in Yeshivas Mir and a prominent leader in Israel's English speaking community, Chaim V'Chessed's role is critical. "Chaim V'Chessed has helped my own family many, many times. They have helped hundreds of my *talmidim* as well. Their work is vital and I strongly encourage people to support them."

It is a concerted effort on many fronts. In the medical department, Chaim V'Chessed helps with scheduling appointments, expediting urgent appointments, and advocating for insurance coverage. A designated expert offers sensitive, confidential guidance on issues pertaining to pregnancy and women's health. Additionally, three Chaim V'Chessed hospital representatives circulate throughout Jerusalem-

based hospitals to ensure that English speakers have an advocate and a caring presence to be there for them when they are otherwise lost and alone, like Avromi and Chaya were. Tourists have called to say that their lives were literally saved by Chaim V'Chessed when their trip turned sour with a medical crisis and they had no one to turn to for support or advocacy.

At Chaim V'Chessed, parents can discuss special education and therapy issues with an expert who “gets” the American mentality, has her finger on the pulse of the Israeli system, can walk them through the application process and can mobilize high-level contacts if need be. In the mental health department, an American social worker working in Israel offers guidance and personalized referrals.

The inevitable challenges that virtually every new arrival encounters—visas, property tax, water bills, work permits, and more—are dealt with by Chaim V'Chessed's trained bureaucratic advisers. Even established families run into bureaucratic challenges, especially when it comes to government benefits for disability, unemployment, old age and the like. Chaim V'Chessed has helped dozens of families file for tens of thousands of shekels in yearly benefits.

*Yeshivah bochurim*, young couples, and seasoned residents have all reported that they feel like Chaim V'Chessed is their caring mother or their ingenious big brother, always ready to put themselves out on a limb for a Jew in need. It is a nonstop operation that helps English speakers successfully navigate and integrate into the fabric of life in Eretz Yisrael. Chaim V'Chessed lifts the challenge of being alone so that all that is left is the ability to soak up the remarkable *avira d'kedushah* in Eretz Yisrael, and to enjoy it for as long as possible.

Contact Chaim V'Chessed within Eretz Yisrael at **072-CHESSSED (072-243-7733)**. To call from outside Israel, dial **(718) 407-2448**. To learn more or to donate to Chaim V'Chessed, visit **[www.chaimvchessed.com](http://www.chaimvchessed.com)**.



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### *Navigation Guides*

*Chaim V'Chessed maintains a growing collection of up-to-date Navigation Guides, which provide clear, step-by-step instructions in English on common bureaucratic endeavors. You can find many of them at [www.chaimvchessed.com/navigation-guides](http://www.chaimvchessed.com/navigation-guides), or email [info@chaimvchessed.com](mailto:info@chaimvchessed.com).*

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## AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN SUITABLE COMMUNITIES

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Many of us have come to Eretz Yisroel as *bochurim* or young *avreichim* to take advantage of the special “*avira d’Eretz Yisroel*” as a springboard for our personal advancement in Torah and *avodas HaShem*. As we continue to grow and start building our families, we have the additional *zechus* and challenge of beginning to raise our families in this special atmosphere. At some point, many of us are faced with a unique challenge. Financial assistance from abroad is not what it used to be, our families, *bli ayin hara*, have grown, and our expenses have increased. Also, the rising cost of housing has become a great financial burden. We cannot afford to buy a house or an apartment that would be a source of stability for us. The communities we live in may have been suitable for us as young couples, but now they may not be the places in which we want to continue to grow or raise our children. We still find that our *avodas HaShem* benefits greatly from the same *avira d’Eretz Yisroel* that brought us here in the first place, or perhaps we even see *yishuv Eretz Yisroel* as part of our *avodas HaShem*.

The solution seems to lie, at least in part, in our ability to find communities with affordable housing and an atmosphere that will allow for our integration. But how will we learn about such places? Do they even exist? This is exactly where the Avira D’Eretz Yisroel project comes in. It is about creating the connections between us and the English speakers who have already made the various relevant Yeshivah/Chareidi communities their home. Many of them will be happy to let us know more about it and get a feel for their communities, whether by providing relevant information, taking us around, or maybe even hosting us for a Shabbos. It would not be an overestimation to say that there is even some excitement about the prospects of additional English speakers joining their communities.



In order to let us hear from those Nachshon-ben-Aminadavs who have already made the jump into their communities—“splitting the sea” for us to join and enabling the *shidduch* between us and our future places of residence and *avodas HaShem*—we have now, *b’ezras HaShem*, created a network of contacts in the various communities, as well as a platform for the exchange of relevant ideas, from the forming of groups for families interested in moving together to anything else that will serve our common purpose.

If this project may fit your needs, or if you are otherwise interested in being involved in this project, please send an email with your information to **info@aviraderetzyisroel.org**, or leave a message at **072-298-6213**. You can also join the online group for the exchange of relevant information at **groups.io/g/aviraderetzyisroel**.

*B’hatzlachah!*

## NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES IN ESTABLISHING RESIDENCE

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In every generation, Jews have longed and yearned to dwell in HaShem's palace. Throughout the centuries, there were always obstacles in their path, such as difficult and dangerous travel conditions, financial hardship, and family and social conditions. The situation has become much easier in the last few decades, as the economy has become more global. Also, transportation and communication are easier and more affordable. A growing number of Jews have finally been able to realize their dream.

Today, *boruch HaShem*, there are thousands of Americans living happy and fulfilling lives in vibrant Torah communities throughout Eretz Yisroel. There are many of them who are part of the Naava Kodesh network of contacts as representatives of their various cities of origin and professional backgrounds.

By connecting to people with similar backgrounds, occupations, and lifestyles similar to your own, you can get the information you need to find appropriate communities, housing, *chinuch*, and employment opportunities, to make Eretz Yisroel your home as well.

Naava Kodesh may be reached at (732) 655-4125, and at [info@naavakodesh.org](mailto:info@naavakodesh.org). Some resources available at [NaavaKodesh.org](http://NaavaKodesh.org).



# Considering living in Eretz Yisroel? Just want to hear how it is from an "insider"?

## A sampling of the backgrounds of *frum* Jews originating in English-speaking countries who have settled in Eretz Yisroel:

...Accountant, Analyst, Art Teacher, Art Therapist, ATLANTA, BALTIMORE, Barber, BEIS MEDRASH GOVOHA, BELLMORE, BERKELEY, Book Publisher, BOSTON, BROOKLYN, BUFFALO, YESHIVAS RABBEINU CHAIM BERLIN, *Chareidi*, CHARLESTON, *Chassidish*, CHICAGO, CHOFETZ CHAIM, CINCINNATI, Computer Programmer, DALLAS, DENVER, Editor, Electrician, ELIZABETH, Engineer, English Teacher, Exercise Teacher, FAR ROCKAWAY, FLATBUSH, Fund Manager, GATESHEAD, HAMILTON, *Heimish*, Homemaker, Home Renovations, Hospital Staff, Instructor, Investor Relations, IT Security, JOHANNESBERG, *Just Plain Frum*, KEW GARDEN HILLS, Kollel Yungerman, LAKEWOOD, Lawyer, Life Coach, *Litvish*, LONDON, LONG ISLAND, LOS ANGELES, Manager, MANCHESTER, MANHATTAN, Marketing, Mathematician, Mediator, Medical Transcriptionist, MELBOURNE, MIAMI, MILWAUKEE, MIRROR YESHIVA, MONSEY, MONTREAL, NER YISROEL, Network Manager, NEW YORK CITY, Nurse, Organization Director, *Orthodox*, Paramedic, PASSAIC, PHILADELPHIA, Psychologist, QUEENS, Rebbi, ROCHESTER, Rov, SEATTLE, Secretary, *Sephardic*, Shatnez Tester, SHE'AR YASHUV, Social Worker, Sofer Sta"m, YESHIVA OF SOUTH FALLSBURG, SOUTH ORANGE, Speech Therapist, ST. LOUIS, Stock Broker, Store Manager, Store Owner, TALMUDICAL YESHIVA OF PHILADELPHIA, Teacher, Technical Writer, TELZ, Therapist, Title Producer, TORONTO, Translator, Tutor, WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, Web Development, WEST HEMPSTEAD, Writer, *Yeshivish*, YESHIVAS RABBEINU YITZCHAK ELCHONON...

**Some firsthand accounts, including useful tips, thoughts and experiences.**