



“Living in the Land”: How Charedi Aliyah Can Work

Charedi Judaism, it is often said, is predicated on the religious disposition of the *Chasam Sofer*: *chadash assur min ha-Torah* (innovations are prohibited). This raises a thorny question concerning Charedi Jews who choose to continue living outside of Israel.

The *Chasam Sofer* writes that the earth of *Eretz Yisrael* is holier than the skies of *chutz la'aretz*, and that the main fulfillment of all mitzvos is specific to the Land. Moreover, he famously extolls the virtues of working in the Land of Israel, explaining that studying and engaging in any trade is part of the Mitzvah of settling the Land. How, then, can so many Charedi Jews remain outside of Isarel?

In his recent book, *Living in the Land*, Rabbi Yoel Berman suggests (by implication) that the answer is more technical than theological. People don't move because of the language, because of seemingly insurmountable cultural barriers, or because of concerns over *parnassah*, finding the right schools, or broader *chinuch* concerns.

In order to alleviate such concerns, Rabbi Yoel Berman has published a wonderful resource entitled “Living in the Land,” in which he culls a wealth of short Aliyah stories penned by a broad range of yeshivish/Charedi families. The stories serve two

basic purposes: 1. To alleviate Aliyah concerns; 2. To showcase a range of chutznik communities and the many ways in which Aliyah can take shape.

In both matters, the book excels. Anybody thinking of Aliyah will be able to find like minded families that have taken the step and made the bold move to Israel, navigating the difference issues – *chinuch*, *parnassah*, culture, language, geography, distance from family, balancing working and learning – in a range of different communities and by means of different approaches.

Some contributors suffice by telling their story. Others weigh in with words of advice: make sure you speak English at home; don't disparage schools even when you disagree with their approach; don't outsource your responsibility to others – and so on. Some are inspirational. The common denominator is that they are down to earth. Beyond occasional mention of Israel's *mekomos hakedoshim* and the like, none wax overly ideological.

Some might see this as a weakness of the book, but I think it's a strength. For ideology, the reader can read *Eim Habanim Semeichah* or other works deliniating the virtues and ideology of Aliyah. For how it can work in the Charedi context, *Living in the Land* is a must read.