

Life in the Land

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From Lakewood to Beit Shemesh

Tzvi Moshe Arnstein, Ramat Beit Shemesh Gimmel



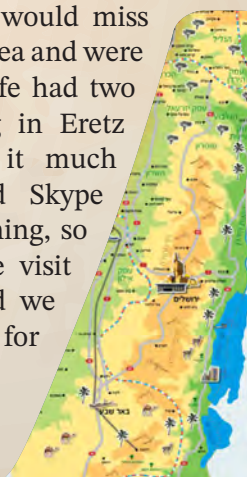
We came to Eretz Yisroel in the summer of 2014 after living in Lakewood for almost seven years. Being “in-towners” originally from Monsey and Flatbush, moving to Eretz Yisroel wasn’t really the “in” thing to do, so why did we?

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.



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.”



This Is Our Own

Yosef Zev Braver, Romema, Yerushalayim

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



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?

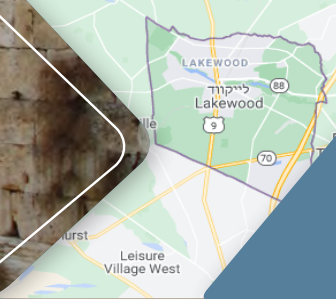
As an IT freelancer, I still worked with my customers remotely. Eventually, I migrated from working remotely with clients from abroad in NY. I launched my “Computer Expert” services in the local market in the *Yerushalayim* area, and I now perform as a Chassidic singer with my own music band for *kumzitzim*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



Accepted at Last

Chaim Ekstein, Romema, Yerushalayim

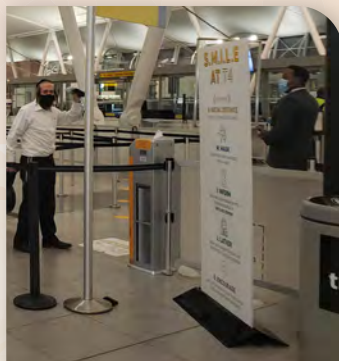


The plane tickets for our move from Monroe, New York to Eretz Yisroel were booked well in advance, on Chanukah of 5780 (2019), before anyone thought about corona. The original date for our flight was July 1, 2020, but it was pushed off time after time due to coronavirus regulations. For two months we were living out of our packed boxes. It happened more than once that my kids would ask me in the morning if we were leaving that day, and only later in the day would I have an answer for them: the flight had been postponed once again.

We finally left for the airport after the sixth time our flight was rescheduled. When we finished with check-in and were finally ready to go to the gate, we saw a sign that the gate was a thirty-minute walk away. The problem was that the flight was in only forty minutes, and the doors usually close fifteen to twenty minutes before take-

off. We started walking quickly, and five minutes later we heard an announcement on the loudspeaker, “Delta airlines paging a group of nine.” That was us. They announced that if we didn’t board soon, they would take off our luggage. After all these weeks of anticipation, would we be let down once again, and at the last minute? I cannot begin to describe the feeling.

In those last fifteen minutes before we did B”H make it to the gate and board the plane,



we felt as if maybe Eretz Yisroel was rejecting us. We were thinking, why doesn’t Eretz Yisroel want us? It just didn’t make any sense to us. I now realize that these hurdles were actually gifts from HaShem, granted to

us so that we will appreciate Eretz Yisroel even more, and be thankful to HaShem for helping us overcome them. This appreciation and thankfulness led us to designate the day of our arrival as a new family Yom Tov, to celebrate our “*yetzi’as America*.”



It all started over twelve years ago, with a 10-day visit to Eretz Yisroel. It helped me see that a real and physical Eretz Yisroel exists “*al pi p’shat*,” and its existence is not to be understood only on some deeper, mystical level, just as with other *mitzvos*. For example, the *daled minim* may allude to different things, i.e. the vital organs, the different types of people etc., but this does not negate the literal aspect of them being four physical objects which HaShem’s will is that we should take on Sukkos. The mystical



aspect of *tzitzis* does not minimize the “simple” act of wearing it to literally perform HaShem’s *mitzvah*, and we can be happy about that, too. I felt the same way about Eretz Yisroel; not perceiving it as also a tangible reality – HaShem’s Chosen physical piece of Land, where He wants us to be – is really to be missing out.

For the past twelve years, at every Shabbos table, the subject was Eretz Yisroel. When we would get to the end of the Pesach seder, I would explain “*l’shana haba’ah b’Yerushalayim*” in a most literal sense. During this period, I took my family four times to Eretz Yisroel for a few weeks. Each time, we left with such a longing and broken hearts that we weren’t staying. Every time we did renovations in our house, we felt sorry that it wasn’t in a house of our own in Eretz Yisroel.

I began to appreciate the challenge of Avraham Avinu. At first I thought, what’s the big deal? How is



“*lech lecha*” a *nisayon*? Anyone who would get a directive from HaShem to go somewhere would surely do so. I then realized that it very well may be that HaShem did direct people to go, but it was only Avraham that actually took the next step and went. “*Vayelech Avram,*” that’s the *chiddush* here. Though nowhere near the magnitude of Avraham’s challenge, I felt many times that I couldn’t get to that next step, until HaShem gave me the strength to come and be part of history, to be a part of this Geulah process. I believe that we got here only in the *zechus* of the countless *tefillos* of our ancestors over the past two thousand years.

As a business consultant, I tell people that if they want to be successful, they should speak to successful people. If you want to be a good plumber, speak to a successful plumber. If you want to be successful in real-estate, speak to someone successful in real-estate, not to a plumber.

I understood that this concept applies to *aliyah* as well. Hearing ten reasons why *aliyah* cannot be successful from people who didn’t succeed, would not

help us succeed in making *aliyah*. We understood that we didn’t need or want support groups comprised of people who may be interested in *aliyah* but have not succeeded as of yet. Certainly, asking people point blank in *shul* (who are still in *chutz laAretz*) what they think about *aliyah* was not going to foster success. What was important was to create our own support network comprised of the people who did succeed.

As author of an Amazon bestseller, “Escape from the Prison of Comfort & Create the Life of Your Dreams,” I’ll let you in on another tip. People may be stuck in their status quo, prevented from changing jobs or relocating, including to Eretz Yisroel. They think they need a clear picture of the future, with a plan they’re able to follow through to the letter, without which they will not proceed. To move forward though, you might just have to jump in. Of course, you must be responsible and address whatever needs to be addressed, but must not forget to trust in HaShem and that He created you as well as everything you need to succeed.





Responsibility

Before making the move to Eretz Yisroel, I went to consult with a *chashuve rav* in Monsey. He told me why such a move cannot work; the school system is different, the culture is different, and there are so many other challenges. I countered that I did not come to take his advice on whether to make the move; that has already been decided.

He then literally jumped off his chair, and said to me. “Wow! I am so jealous of you! How can I help you?”

I then realized that people really do want to help. It’s just that they cannot take the responsibilities that people want to throw off of themselves. These kinds of decisions have to come from you; it’s you that has to decide that the reward of living in Eretz Yisroel is worth you taking on the challenges. Once you do that, people will be glad to help.



Land of Opportunity

Dr. Gabriel Joel, Rechovot

We moved to Eretz Yisroel in 2014. It wasn't because of the finances; we were *b"H* doing fine in Cleveland. It wasn't because of the *chinuch*; our kids were learning in Mosdos Ohr HaTorah, a very Chareidi place with about 75% of the student body coming from *kollel* homes or whose parents were involved in *chinuch*. Socially as well as in *ruchniyus*, we felt that we and our children would be just fine if we stayed. There was no "real" reason for us to pick ourselves up and leave everything behind, aside for one: we felt that the future for us Yidden is only in Eretz Yisroel.

I believe that today Eretz Yisroel is the real "land of opportunity"; you just have to find it and put in your effort. I am happy to share some of the opportunities we have found.

We made a few pilot trips before our move, and looked into the different

communities. To minimize the pressures involved in moving to and living in a different country, we looked for a community where we would be able to "copy & paste" our life in America as much as possible. I came to understand that the communities in Eretz Yisroel can be grossly categorized into "in-town" and "out-of-town," just like back in America. Being originally from Atlanta, I've found that out-of-towners like us might specifically prefer the unique taste of Rechovot.

We were looking for an out-of-town kind of place that is solid "Anglo" Orthodox, "Black Hat" but more accepting, where it would be fine to wear colored shirts or walk around in a T-shirt. We were also looking for a central location, in Israel's "Mercaz" (center), where the job market is stronger. Rechovot, and specifically the Chatam





Actual view from apartment





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kehillah of English speakers, perfectly fit the bill. We found it to be a place where Yeshivish out-of-towners like us could really feel at home.

The *kehillah* was founded in the 1980s by a group of families for the Torah advancement of the growing English-speaking community in Rechovot. Our *rav* is Rav Dovid Stein *shlita*, one of the *kehillah*'s founders. The recent increase in young people who have joined and become active in the *kehillah* led to the recruitment of assistant Rav Yosef Ashenberg *shlita*, a *talmid* of Ner Yisrael of Baltimore and of Yeshivas Mir. The *kehillah* is now ready to absorb a new generation of newcomers. The challenge is to have the trickle of

frum American immigrants who have recently become part of our growing *kehillah*, turn into the beginning of a wave.

One advantage of out-of-town communities is that there is less polarization. Rechovot is home to many different kinds of people, and there is no critical mass of any specific group. Due to this fact, there is a wider range of people who comfortably self-identify as Chareidi, more than what one may find in the in-town communities. The relaxed, non-judgmental atmosphere is very relevant for the integration of *frum* immigrants from the U.S. I personally feel completely integrated and identify with the Israeli Chareidim here.

The local Chareidi school here in Rechovot is part of the relatively-new Mamlachti-Chareidi (Government Chareidi) school system, where, in addition to the high level of *limudei kodesh*, there is a good level of *limudei chol* as well as an emphasis on *derech eretz* – similar to what you would find in *frum* schools in





the U.S. This is something that was important to us and other American families here. So far, for the coming school year, there are already eight kids from immigrant Anglo families enrolled for the first grade. The *cheider* has wonderful *rabbeim*, and includes all grades from first through eighth. There is a similar girls' school with an incredible American-Israeli principal, that has classes up until third grade so far, adding a new grade each year.

We came when our oldest was in first grade. Integration for new immigrants beyond first grade may be difficult, and might limit schooling options to those available in Ramat Beit Shemesh. (It is possible to commute from Rechovot to Ramat Beit Shemesh, albeit not a particularly short commute.) Even that is not to be taken for granted; Ramat

Beit Shemesh has come a long way in the past several years, becoming much more “user-friendly” for English speakers, and thus serving as a viable option for many.

Rechovot is not the countryside, but it is a bit less dense compared to Ramat Beit Shemesh and it is a central city as well. So although the pricing for homes is similar to Ramat Beit Shemesh, it is actually quite a bargain. Most members of the *kehillah* live in apartments—including garden apartments, though there are some who live in private houses.



All in all, Rechovot and the Chatam *kehillah* have delivered on my expectations. They may live up to yours, too!



Easing the Move

In my line of work – dentistry – as well as for other freelance trades and occupations, it may be difficult to find a 5-9 job, and I had to build my own practice from scratch. Building up my own private practice and reaching financial stability was no small task, but we persevered and didn't give up, putting our heads down, barreling forward, and overcoming one obstacle after the next. Thankfully, today, my clinic is popular and successful. I firmly believe that Eretz Yisroel is the real land of opportunity if you have the gumption and will to succeed.

I have also seen time and again that newcomers who are employed immediately in an already established framework or company have a much easier *aliyah*. For anyone planning to move here, I would strongly suggest trying to set up a job that will be ready for you right when you come. In particular, those with professions such as accounting, law, programming or engineering who have done so, have great chances of success.



It's a Package Deal

Shira Yael Klein, Beitar Illit

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.



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.

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

A word about finances: Tuition, childcare, and healthcare are

there is just more spirituality in the air. Emunah, bitachon, and yir'as Shomayim come a lot easier here.

substantially cheaper here. Just to shock you, *cheider* is around 300 *shekalem* (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.



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.

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

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.

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 *kehillas*, 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



Paving the Way

Yehuda Orzel, Givat HaMoreh, Afula

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 almost 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

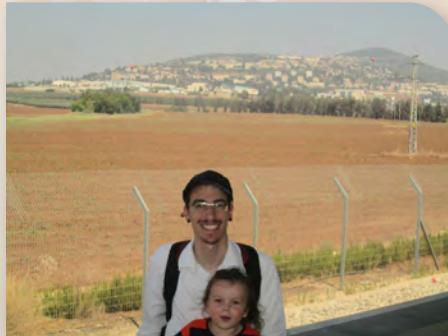


in addition to the fact that the affordable housing here meant it was possible for us to seriously consider purchasing a home

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” *kehilla* itself, which includes *bnei Torah* who are Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Teimanim, and



moved here with her husband, both originally from England, and I think it was much easier for them to make

a bit of Chassidish-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.

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.

After we settled here, others have considered following our path. My wife has a friend who eventually

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.



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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