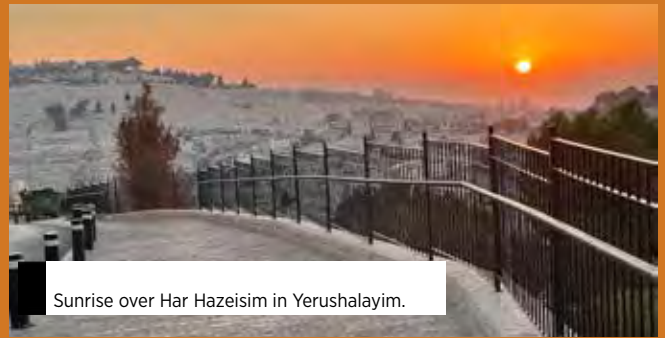


PART OF THE MASTER PLAN

“The fact that the war broke out on Simchas Torah, a day of rejoicing with the Torah, was eerily significant,” says Mrs. Toporowitch. “Were we getting a message that Hashem was not happy with us? Imagining what the hostages must be going through, as well as the enormous danger this war could lead to, rouses me to *teshuvah* in a way that could never happen normally! I, as well as countless others, wonder whether this might be the war of Gog U’Magog, and the end of days. Hashem was and is talking to us. It’s not *b’kochi v’otzem yadi* – by the strength and power of our hands. Hashem did not let the heads of state see what He did not want them to see. No matter how sophisticated and widespread the Israeli intelligence system is, if Hashem’s plan was to have us suffer war and, *chalilah*, potential annihilation, then that is what had to take place. Why? Because the suffering pushes us in the right direction!”

“Despite the apparent danger, I would rather be here than any other place in the world,” she states clearly. “Hashem is with us and will never give up on us. We may be undergoing a painful ‘surgery,’ but we are getting closer and closer to being truly healed! May we merit to see that happening very, very soon!”

“In general, the feeling is that Hashem is doing big things with *Am Yisrael*,” says Rabbi Indik. “Where and how this will end we don’t know, but we do know Hashem’s ultimate plan with this world, and it definitely feels like things are



Sunrise over Har Hazeisim in Yerushalayim.

moving. So yes, the *nissim* and *niflaos* that will happen *b’acharis hayamim* were said to happen in Eretz Yisrael, and I of course don’t want to be anywhere else and miss out on the action.”

“All signs point to the imminent arrival of the *Geulah*,” says Mrs. Istrin. “Why would anyone want to be far away? Here we wait expectantly for the *shofar* of Moshiach, and we are eager to be the first to greet him! The main reason I want to be in Israel (all the time, not just now) is to be ready for the *Geulah*. For that reason, I have not left Israel for any reason during the last 14 years – my family comes to me here, of course – despite having opportunities.” Mrs. Istrin adds that “we’re here ready and waiting to greet all of *Klal Yisrael* coming off the eagles’ wings any moment now – the *Geulah* is almost here...”

BEING HERE IS A PRIVILEGE

“The *ruchniyus* I have been fortunate to experience these last two years, living in Eretz Yisrael, is like nothing else I have experienced over my 70-plus years. It is a *zechus*, a real privilege, to live in Eretz Yisrael, and especially in Yerushalayim, at any time,” says Mrs. Friedland. “But especially at this time, when the *tzaros* are real, and the outpouring of *ahavas Yisrael* is indescribable, that *zechus* becomes deeply seared into one’s *neshamah*.”

Mrs. Dorfman says she has had Americans who are now in the U.S. say to her wistfully that they wish they were here. “Imagine someone fleeing from the Ukraine war saying that!” She laughs. “But here, we are all here on a mission, so it’s different, it’s important, it’s meaningful.”

Mr. Abadi acknowledges that it might be challenging at times here, but “it’s 100% worth it for me. I feel safer in Hashem’s palace and more connected to the truth. The goal of this *galus* is *achdus* and it is very strong here now, and also my own spiritual level is always growing here.”

“Ever since I am married, I live in Israel, now close to 60 years, and up to this day, I feel the amazing spirituality in the air. I run a business, and I confess that there is no day that I do not see an open miracle in my seemingly mundane activities,” says Mrs. Miller. “I *mamash* feel Hashem holding my hands, propelling my mind in every direction and step I make. I did not feel this in *chutz laAretz*, which is saturated with *gashmiyus*,” she adds. But does this feeling exist also now in these difficult times? For her, the answer is yes. “Today, in the midst of the horror and chaos, I feel this feeling more so. Literally, I feel I am living in the prophetic times predicted by the *Nevi’im*. I pray it should only be with mercy and *rachamim*.”

In her personal experience living here in Eretz Yisrael, which of course may be different for others, she says, “Of the many open miracles I see daily, one is that even in these trying times at the moment, I do not feel or see any deficiency in my *gashmiyus* life whatsoever. *Baruch Hashem*, miraculously, the opposite is the case.”

There is one thing she says that I have heard from more than one person here, regardless of their personal circumstances here: “I verbally thank Hashem daily that He chose me to have the *zechus* to live here in the Holy Land!”

In conclusion, as Mrs. Ritvo says, “We hope and pray that Hashem will see the *achdus* caused by this war and our strengthening in Torah and *mitzvos*, and say enough to our *tzaros*. We pray for Moshiach to come, when Hashem will finally be in His Home, the Beis Hamikdash, and there will be no more hardships and pain.”

And, in the words of Mrs. Poupko, “May Hashem see us in our newfound unity and hug us in His impenetrable embrace.” ■



HERE TO STAY

I reached out to quite a few Anglos who live here in Eretz Yisrael to get their input for this article. Different people brought up various issues and subjects, but there was one question I asked that almost everyone I reached out to had what to say about – why they would rather be here now more than anywhere else. Not if, but why!

“I know what it’s like to be in the U.S. during an Israeli crisis. Worry, worry, worry, and all you hear is bad news,” says Reva Rubenstein, who made *aliyah* to the Yerushalayim suburb of Agan HaAyalot this past summer. “Here, I am making *challos* for soldiers, baking for the displaced families in the south, going to say *Tehillim* with my beautiful neighbors, and feeling so close to Hashem. While the *shiurim* given in the U.S. are focusing on how terrible the times are, here the Rabbanim are stressing *achdus*, *emunah*, and *bitachon*. *Baruch Hashem* that we are *zocheh* to be here.”

“This is my home, this is the Jewish people’s home. Here Hashem’s connection is stronger and more intense. Being in Israel isn’t only about being here when it’s easy, pleasant, and fun, but it’s our home and we’re committed and here even when it’s hard. As *Chazal* say, Eretz Yisrael is acquired through *yissurim*,” says Mrs. Budman. “Even with these changes, fear, and uncertainty, we are still here in Israel. I am not going to lie and say that going back for a short period of time didn’t cross my mind, but ultimately I decided to stay.”

For Mrs. Gerson and others, though, the thought actually didn’t cross their mind. “I would not want to be anywhere other than here, in my ancient homeland. I can’t imagine sitting in America and watching it all on social media. I hold dual citizenship, but the thought of ‘evacuating’ was ridiculous. And if it comes down to it, I am ready to defend my homeland with my own hands. *B’ezer Hashem*, I should not need to do that, though.”

Or, in the words of Mrs. Lauer, “This is where we belong, this is our land. Why should we give them what they want? For us to leave Eretz Yisrael?”

“Whenever I travel back from the U.S., I lean toward the plane’s window to get a glimpse of home a minute earlier. With all the things I would want to be different, this is mine,” says Mrs. Poupko. “Just like my autistic grandchild who I would want to speak and act like a normal child, but I love him just the same, because he is mine. Maybe I love him even more, because more of me is invested in him.

“Same with Eretz Yisrael,” she adds. “Along with the fear and the worry, I feel privileged to live here. My husband and I often say that the smartest thing we ever did was to move here. Life has been hard, but one feels Hashem so clearly in one’s life.”

“Where else should I be but home?” says Mrs. Dorfman. “This is not some idealistic chatter; we are Jews and this is Israel and this is where we belong.” She acknowledges, though, the challenges that exist at times like these. “Yes, it was scary and it is still scary. Too bad. That’s what we’re going through right now,” she adds, with it being

self-understood that this is just a temporary phase.

Of course, some people are connected to Eretz Yisrael by virtue of the fact they have been living here for many years and have established themselves here. As Mrs. Poupko says, “There is no other place I call home. This is where I have been living for the past 45 years, *baruch Hashem*.”

Mrs. Steinbruch asks, “Why wouldn’t I want to be here? This is home. I’ve lived here for over 30 years and this is where I’m comfortable.”

“Why shouldn’t I be here now? This is where I’ve built my life for the past 18 years,” echoes Rabbi Fast.

But this feeling of “home” extends to new *olim*, such as Mrs. Friedman, as well, with more of a focus on the general idea of Eretz Yisrael being home for the Jews. “Eretz Yisrael is the place where Jews should be. This is my home; it is where I belong and I am not running away,” she says.

“I am grateful to be blessed to return now to live in our homeland, this tiny spiritual vortex on earth somehow given to us by the Al-mighty,” says Bracha Goetz. “It is a miracle to live here every moment, surrounded by nations that want to exterminate us. The open hatred of our existence increases the significance of staying in this wondrous place at this time. What is happening now has gotten me to value life in Eretz Yisrael even more.”

Apparently, also Jews who do not currently live in Eretz Yisrael perceive it as being “home,” as Mrs. Friedman noted, “I was speaking to my mother the other night and she was saying how they want to come here, to Eretz Yisrael. This is where we belong!”

And as Mrs. Miller’s husband Meir simply states, Eretz Yisrael is home, for his own family and for all Jews. “We have lived most of our lives in Eretz Yisrael, and I think that we did not have any notion of not living here at this time or other times. All our children, grandchildren, and almost all of our great-grandchildren were born here in Eretz Yisrael and live here. This is the land of the Jews, for the Jews.”

Mr. Miller adds, “According to the Ramban, *yishuv Eretz Yisrael* is a *mitzvas aseh*, an obligatory *mitzvah* from the Torah.”

Mrs. Dorfman confesses, “I never wanted to make *aliyah* as a child, teenager, or young adult. But then my new husband and I started reading the *parashah* together every week... how many times can you read about going to the Land, conquering the Land, entering the Land, fighting for the Land before you realize that it’s a *mitzvah* like everything else that we do? Why am I making a *brachah* and taking *challah* and keeping Shabbos but not moving to Eretz Yisrael? So, we did. I’ll never, ever look back.”

It’s not “just” a *mitzvah*, though. “Being here in the land of Israel is my most basic declaration that Eretz Yisrael is our G-d-given homeland, and we are not giving up on it no matter what they try to do to us,” says Yosef Sholom Rabin. “We will fight to the best of our capabilities to keep Eretz Yisrael in Jewish hands and block those who seek to desecrate Hashem’s Name and His people.”