



Rabbi Avi Berman Executive Director, OU Israel

Yom HaAliyah, which took place this past Sunday, was established to acknowledge the necessity and importance of Aliyah to the State of Israel and to celebrate the incredible contributions of Olim to our Homeland. These are important, but I think what is equally, perhaps more important, is for us olim to remind ourselves of our personal Aliyah journeys, thank those who helped us, and reflect on the people in our lives whom we can help to successfully make Aliyah. I cannot mention my Aliyah without thanking my parents from the bottom of my heart for bringing my siblings and I when I was nine.

Most olim I know say that Aliyah is the best decision they ever made (perhaps second to marrying their spouse), but they will also acknowledge that it was difficult. Even the best Aliyah stories deal with family and friends left behind or other challenges connected to integrating themselves and their families, learning the language and culture, and finding parnasa.

The beauty of Yom HaAliyah is two-fold. First, it helps those who have not made Aliyah better understand its complexities and its beauty. A lot of effort, time, money, and sacrifice go into making Aliyah. Without a doubt it's one of the best deci-

sions someone can make. Yet, we can't take it for granted or judge those who are not rushing to come. We recognize that this is not an easy decision.

The second beautiful aspect of Yom HaAliyah is that it serves as a reminder to those of us who made Aliyah to identify people in our lives whose Aliyah we can help. Whether it be a new neighbor who needs help understanding their electric bill, a kid in our child's class who could use a playdate (pending corona guidelines), or someone we meet at the grocery store who could use a smile and a few kind words. It might be friends living abroad who have questions about life in Israel. Personally, over the past half a year I have received many more inquiries than usual from prospective olim who have questions about how their kids will adjust, looking for a job, or curious about the community we live in, Givat Ze'ev, or other communities.

While Yom HaAliyah has a specific date on the calendar, it should be the impetus to serve as a constant reminder to have our fingers on the pulse to help more olim come and thrive in Israel. Who do you know that is planning Aliyah and would appreciate a call with some words of chizuk? Who moved to your community and would be touched to receive a fresh challah from you erev Shabbat?

While OU Israel partners with many

municipalities throughout Israel, I'd like to thank Pini Glinkevitz, head of the Immigration Absorption Authority, and his colleagues at Iriyat Yerushalayim for constantly reaching out to OU Israel, partnering with us and supporting our programming to help English-speaking olim integrate and thrive in Yerushalayim.

Recently, the OU Israel Center held two panels highlighting olim who are having a positive impact in Israel - one during Torah Yerushalayim and another Sunday night in honor of Yom HaAliyah. We all know about inspirational olim. Share your story and their impact with friends and family grappling with the decision to make Aliyah.

It is very appropriate that Yom HaAliyah falls when we are reading about Avraham Avinu. Avraham exemplifies leaving everything to come to the Land of Israel. He is also the prime example of hachnasat orchim (welcoming guests). Avraham understood that if someone is not settled, it is imperative that you welcome him and do everything possible for hachnasat orchim. Right after his bris, when he was in tremendous pain, Avraham went out in search of guests, and when they came he prepared an elaborate feast for them. As we celebrate Aliyah, let's make a commitment to be like Avraham Avinu and be proactive in welcoming our brothers and sisters home and helping them with their Aliyah journeys.

Avi
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