



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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There is a line I've heard from Rav Nachman Kahana many times that has had a profound impact on the way I view making *aliyah*. Rav Kahana says that people don't really "make" *aliyah*, but rather, *aliyah* makes them. This idea has really resonated with me ever since I heard it. So much of who I am today, who I married, the children that my wife and I raised, our grandchildren, everything that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* has given us, is all based on the lives we live in Israel, the Torah we keep in Israel, and the Jewish people living in the State of Israel. Quite literally, *aliyah* made us into who we are.

Yet, beyond the idea of it, I think it is also practical. It teaches us that not just who we surround ourselves with but where we are physically living shapes and impacts us on a deep level. Those of us that have had the *zechut* of making *aliyah* know that their lives in Israel are nothing like they were in *chutz la'aretz*. It calls on those who can to make that change and make themselves in the process.

As I've shared many times, my family made *aliyah* when I was nine years old, and I had three younger siblings at the time. We left New York to go to Israel on the 4th of July, as symbolic as that is. It was not a small decision for my parents to leave America. In fact, neither of them had ever visited Israel before

making *aliyah*. But they grew up in very Zionist homes, and it was clear to them that Israel was the place that every Jew should be. So they sat with each one of their three older children individually and explained to them why the family was moving to Israel, and we began to pack up the house.

A number of weeks before we were set to move, after my parents had already sold our house, we got a phone call from the Jewish Agency. They explained to us that, *Baruch Hashem*, the State of Israel was successful in bringing thousands of Jews from Ethiopia to Israel. The area we were meant to go to, the *merkaz klita* (absorption center) in Mevaseret was taken up by the new immigrants from Ethiopia. So they wanted to ask us to please postpone our *aliyah* until everything was sorted out. My father turned down this proposal. For one, if the move was postponed, we'd have to join our schools in Israel in the middle of the year, but mostly, he saw the momentum in the family. We were pumped to go. We had already told the whole extended family, all of our friends, and so on. He did not want to pass up on this excitement and let it die down before we even stepped foot on Israeli soil.

So if we couldn't go to the *merkaz klita* in Mevaseret, where could we go? A friend of my father told him to call the Gush Emunim movement, and my father, not knowing exactly what they were, spoke to someone by the name of Yaakov Sternberg. After looking into it, Yaakov called my father back and told him that he could get our family a cement



In Loving Memory of
**Harriet (Hindy)
Herskowitz z"l**
on her Eleventh *Yahrtzeit*
י"ז בתמוז

caravan on a *yishuv* in the Shomron called Kedumim. Long story short, we moved from a big home in the United States to a caravan in Kedumim. That was 40 years ago this past Friday.

Every year on the 15th of Tammuz, we leave out *tachanun* in our davening, as our rabbis have *paskened*, to celebrate the anniversary of our *aliyah*. Additionally, every ten years, our family makes it a special day to celebrate. This year, in addition to this big 40, it is also the 50th anniversary of my parents marriage. What a celebration! We decided as a family that my five siblings, their spouses, and my family, would all do a Shabbat together with our parents.

We started our lives as *olim* in the *yishuv* of Kedumim, and so we felt it appropriate to spend this family *Shabbat* in the Shomron. To be there would bring us back to our roots, since we're all living in the greater Yerushalayim area these days. We wanted a place that could bring us back to the mountains of the Shomron and where we could once again connect to the incredible atmosphere and the incredible history that the Shomron has to give us. Therefore, we booked the *yeshiva* in Elon Moreh, with plenty of rooms, a big lunchroom, and a *Beit Midrash* for us to study and *daven* in.

On Friday we toured the Shomron, going from Mitzpe Yosef, which overlooks Kever Yosef in Shechem, to Har Kabir, which overlooks Har Gerizim and Har Eival, as well as the entire Emek Tirzah, which we're going to be reading about in this week's parsha - Emek Tirzah is the inheritance that Tirzah, the daughter of Tzlofechad, received. For many of my siblings' children and grandchildren, this was the first time that they had made it out to Elon Moreh and to the mountains of the Shomron.



It wasn't hard at all for them to connect. Just the ride out on the many new roads in Yehuda and the Shomron were really breathtaking, with incredible scenery and mountains. They were able to see, hear and learn the history of the Jewish people that literally happened on those mountains from "and Avram traveled the land until Shechem, until Elon Moreh" (Bereshit 12:6), and seeing the fulfillment of the prophecy of "you shall yet plant vines upon the mountains of Shomron" (Yirmiyah 31:5) when we can clearly see the vineyards and the wineries that are being established there.

One of the pioneers that started the *yishuv* of Elon Moreh is a man by the name of Rav Benny Katzover. Rav Benny co-founded the Gush Emunim movement, which ultimately began the building up of Yehuda and the

Shomron. Since we were in Elon Moreh, I asked Rav Benny if he could come and tell us the history. He gave us a beautiful audio-visual presentation in the amazing *midrasha* in Elon Moreh, giving the whole story of the rebuilding of Elon Moreh, as well the entire area as told in Tanach.

After the grand tour on Friday of all the different sights and lookouts, we all got ready for Shabbat and gathered together with my parents. All of us in a room together, it was just incredible. To think that 40 years ago, my parents came with just four of us, and how the family has grown from that point was so heartwarming and inspiring. The whole family showed their thanks to them and to give them the *nachat* they so deserve for bringing us to the Land of Israel. We thanked them for giving us such important values, of *hachnasat orchim*, of loving every Jew no matter what he or she look like, of having a strong relationship with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, as well as not being afraid to accomplish whatever we feel we are able to accomplish.

At the end of Shabbat, I spoke to everyone. I said that even if all of my parents' descendants would stand up on Har Gerizim for weeks and months and just scream thank you to my parents over and over again, it would never be enough to thank them for what they gave us by making *aliyah*.

So let me continue to thank my parents here in these pages, for giving me the values that it takes to work for the OU, and specifically the OU in Israel, where the values that they gave me are identical to the values that we try to implement at the OU in Israel: to love every Jew, to try to help every Jew, whether they're teens at risk in Israel, or they are *olim* that made *aliyah* and are trying to be

absorbed in Israel and connect to the Land of Israel. May *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* continue giving my parents endless health, *yiddishe nachat* from all their descendants, and may we be *zoche* to continue celebrating together for many more years.

One of the highlights of the weekend was the fact that our son Mordechai Tzemach started putting on *tefillin* this past Friday, our aliyah anniversary. To be able to do it with our entire family and then to have my father stand next to my son when he put on *tefillin* for the first time, that was so tremendous. For my father to be able to see not just many descendants continuing, but also that moment of literal connection, of Mordechai Tzemach tying himself through his *tefillin* to previous generations of his father and his grandfather and especially to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, that was so important. He will be able to take the values that he received from his grandparents and ancestors and continue them into the future. With Hashem's help, Mordechai Tzemach, together with all of his siblings, will continue walking in the ways of Hashem and the values passed down to them.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman



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