

SNAAC/shots

Decisions...Decisions

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Photo by Charles Green



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Chairman's Message

Pesach reminds us where we came from, who we are and why we are here. The seder relives the past, as we retell our journey out of bondage; enjoying the present with our preparations and family togetherness; and looking towards the future as we imagine a world after Covid and separation. Our SNAC community is a reflection of this process. We reflect our past via the many languages, accents and diversity of ritual we bring

to the community. In the present, we reach out to one another – as we socialize, study and pray together. And we look towards the future, individually and communally – a future imbued with a heightened sense of appreciation as new freedoms are within reach, both nationally and internationally. Our freedom is imbued with gratitude, knowing that our shul may soon be filled with faces and sounds of prayer that we have not seen nor heard in two years as we come together with a renewed sense of community.

Chag Sameach to all.
• Shelli Weisz, Chairman



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Editors' Welcome

We were pleased to receive so many interesting contributions to this issue of SNACshots. The various stories about decision-making ran the gamut from the professional to the geographical to the philosophical. In addition, we had several heartwarming items for our “Something Good”

section. We hope to make this a regular feature of SNACshots, if only to remind us that good things happen all the time, even when life seems to be throwing us curve balls at an ever-increasing pace.

It is encouraging to read about the travels of SNACpackers both in Israel and overseas. No pandemic will keep us from traveling the world and from bonding with our own wonderful country.

This Pesach, the season of renewal, we are hoping to see the beginning of renewed incoming traffic from our members. At the time of writing, this may indeed be the case. However, with the unremitting vacillations in the Covid situation, we can never be sure.

• Reva Garmise, Roy Pinchot



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SNACtivities

Photo by Roy Pinchot



Agog by Agam

A full bus of SNACers eagerly arrived at the Agam Museum in Rishon LeZion, anticipating a day of culture – with the works of Yaacov Agam and the rich heritage of Yemenite Jewry at the Yemenite Heritage Center in Rehovot. For many of us, our first destination proved to be an encounter with genius. Agam, an Israeli sculptor and experimental artist, widely known for his contributions to optical and kinetic art, allowed us to see beyond the visible and experience art that reflects reality as a constant “becoming.” One reviewer states: “Agam’s multi-faceted and ever-changing artworks, invite us to immerse in what the artist calls the 4th dimension – the dimension of time and movement, change and the unexpected.” Our tour guide provided fascinating stories of Agam’s life, including his expulsion from religious school at an early age and the hours he spent outside the school building, forming sculptures in the sand and watching the wind move and change them. Change became a dominant motif in Agam’s art. His transformative art also reflects his spiritual values and his kabbalistic background. One work, hanging in the

main exhibition hall, is totally brown when standing to the right of the work and after moving left is totally green. According to Agam, “The brown is Israel before the Jewish nation arrived and the green is after the land responded to the Jewish people.” Saturated with color and a vibrant visual symphony, we needed time to digest all our eyes had seen, along with a light, tasty lunch at our next stop, the Yemenite Heritage Center. Our friendly tour guide told us of Jewish life in Yemen and described the migration of 2500 Jews from Yemen to Israel during the First Aliyah, most settling in Jerusalem and suffering severe economic hardships. From 1949 to 1950, 50,000 Jews from Yemen came to Israel, risking their lives. After our guide’s informative and engaging lecture, we were free to explore the exhibits on display. “Silversmith with Golden Hands,” an exhibit of Yosef Cohen’s filigree from Yemen, was a popular exhibit. Cohen uses silversmithing techniques that are hundreds of years old, joining together threads and granules on a metal base. As we re-entered our tour bus, many agreed that this tiyul delivered what it promised to be – a day of culture and enjoyment. ●

- Ginger Pinchot

“Latkes and Leadership”

On Shabbat Chanukah, December 3-4, SNAC members filled the synagogue to enjoy the annual Chanukah Shabbaton. This year’s Scholar in Residence, Rabbi Yehoshua Felberg, presented several Divrei Torah on the theme of “Latkes and Leadership: Jews, their Leaders

and the Oily Truth.” Over the festive Shabbat, Rabbi Felberg addressed the membership several times, including lectures on Yosef, Yehuda and Yisrael. The message that filtered through his talks was the importance of good and ethical leadership, in biblical and in modern times. A tasty dairy meal was served at the Lunch and Learn session on Shabbat. ●

Shoes for Chanukah

Once again SNAC raised funds for over 100 pairs of children’s shoes as part of an annual project of the Jaffa Institute. This organization is devoted to helping at-risk youth in Jaffa. And just before Chanukah, as the weather turns wintry and old shoes are worn out or outgrown, the project provides shoes for the youngsters who attend their Centers. The children delight in the gifts of shoes that also allow them to participate in the Centers’ recreational activities. Every NIS 100 donation buys a child a much-needed pair of shoes. SNAC is proud to partner with the Jaffa Institute in this important project. ●



A Torah Scroll for SNAC

For some time, it has been clear that the moment is overdue for SNAC to possess its own Sefer Torah. The Board decided to fulfill this need by commissioning a new SNAC Torah scroll. Writing a Sefer Torah is no small task. It comprises some 600,000 words and is handwritten on special calfskin parchment by a specially trained *sofer*. As every scribe has his own individual calligraphic style, Mike Garmise and Rafe Safier inspected the work of several *sofrim* before selecting the work of a scribe recommended by Machon Ot. This organization is probably the world’s foremost specialist in maintaining and repairing Sifrei Torah; its expert team is supervising the progress of the work and carrying out checks, both manually and electronically, to ensure that we receive a perfect product. Commissioning a new Sefer Torah is an exciting project and it has been a huge privilege for me to have benefitted from the learning curve prior to instructing the *sofer* to proceed. This has been a community project and all members of SNAC were invited to eternalize the memory of loved ones by participating in the funding either in their own names or in the names of their families. Participation is recognized with a personalized certificate. We anticipate that the new Torah scroll will be delivered in time for next Rosh Hashanah and welcomed with a festive ceremony. The Board decided to dedicate this new Sefer Torah to the memory of Tom Weisz. ●

- Alan Lewis

First Tom Weisz Memorial Lecture

SNAC was honored by the visit of Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion on December 9 to deliver the first quarterly

■ snactivities ■



SNAC Chairman Shelli Weisz with Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein

lecture in the Tom Weisz z”l Memorial Lecture series. The rabbi’s topic was the confrontation between Joseph and Yehuda following the discovery of Joseph’s cup in Benjamin’s baggage, and he introduced the thought-provoking idea that Yehuda’s approach was assertive rather than conciliatory. The lecture was well attended, both at the shul and via Zoom. While it was always his wish to remain in the background, Tom Weisz z”l made a huge contribution to Torah learning at SNAC. He taught Tanach to his Thursday afternoon *shiur*

group; he taught Gemorah to a small group and was always willing to step up and deliver the Shabbat *shiur* between Mincha and Maariv. The board felt that this contribution should be remembered in a tangible manner and so the idea of a memorial lecture series was conceived. We plan to invite other prominent scholars to SNAC to deliver future lectures in the series. ●

- Alan Lewis

Purim Fun!

We had a full house at the Megillah reading this year as in the good old pre-Covid days. With masks covering half of our faces and a wild assortment of Purim headwear, it was a challenge to guess who was who. The reading was divided among Rafe Safier, Avi Tokayer and Mike Garmise all of whom were in good form. Later in the evening, we watched the spirited Zoom rendition of Megillah on the Roof – Megillah on the Roof performed to Popular “Fiddler” melodies, written by (and starring) our tireless chairman, Shelli Weisz. The next day, 56 of us attended a seudah and rejoiced in once again celebrating together after two years of Covid restrictions. Charles Green, Roy Cohen and Mike Garmise had us all singing, clapping and even dancing as they sang favorite melodies, led by guitar-strumming, energetic Charles. No one wanted the music to end. ●



Meet the Safiers

By Reva Garmise



While traveling the byways of Israel, if you happen to come across a helmeted American couple pedaling along on state-of-the-art bicycles, with ear-to-ear smiles on their faces, chances are you are seeing Roberta and Rafe Safier, SNAC’s sporty duo, as they enjoy the time afforded by their retirement and their relocation to Israel. Not that biking is new to the Safiers. It is one of many activities that have kept them fit and happy for many years. Their dog, Cookie, was the catalyst for their active lifestyle, back in the US. They lived in the Teaneck area of New Jersey and would hike far afield with their loyal quadruped friend. Their vacation home in Upstate New York gave them even greater range for hiking and biking. Add to this tennis, racquet ball, swimming and more and you have part of the picture of what makes the Safiers tick. Another part is their common interest in Jewish studies. Both Roberta and Rafe had Orthodox upbringings. Where better to continue studying, via the many courses on offer here? And

on many a Shabbat you can hear Rafe’s letter-perfect *leining* at SNAC. “My grandparents lived with our family when I was a child, and my grandfather taught me and my two brothers how to *lein*. I even had a job reading the Torah at a synagogue in Queens, New York earning a whopping \$25 a week for my efforts.” Roberta’s grandparents also spent a lot of time with her family. “I learned a lot from them. My close relationship with my grandmother actually led me to take courses in recreation for the elderly. I’ve always felt most comfortable working with seniors.” Roberta also has four siblings, balancing the age differential in the household. Rafe and Roberta grew up in Queens, just a block away from one another. They attended the same shul, had mutual friends and even their parents were friends, so it is not surprising that they became childhood sweethearts. Both attended Queens College, where Rafe studied economics and political science and Roberta majored in sociology. By this time (1972), having dated for a few years, they tied the knot.

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A Year-Long Honeymoon

Soon after their marriage they came to Israel to spend a magical year in Jerusalem. Rafe was studying business management and economics at Hebrew University. His light class schedule allowed the newlyweds time to tour the country, far and wide. “It was like a year-long honeymoon,” recalls Roberta. “Once a week we’d go to the bank on Ben Yehuda Street to cash \$25, which lasted us the whole week,” adds Rafe. “Times were different then. Almost no one had a phone and we used to shlep by bus to the post office on Yafo Street, where we were seated in a booth and waited to be connected to our families in the US. We would carry our dirty laundry on a bus to the one laundromat in the city. Yom Ha’Atzmaut was amazing: a military parade, a concert at Binyanei Ha’uma, the flyover of military aircraft and the dancing in the streets... it was wonderful to be part of the celebrations.”



Our Kibbutz ‘Family’

Although they have no relatives in Israel, they do have an “adopted” family in Kibbutz Be’erot Yitzhak. Rafe had spent a summer in Israel at the kibbutz, after his first year of college. The connection with the family actually began when his late younger brother, Jay, followed in Rafe’s footsteps and spent a summer at the same kibbutz. Today, four generations of Safiers consider this kibbutz family to be their relatives in Israel. Jay sadly passed away at a young age. After the year-long honeymoon in Israel, the Safiers returned to New York. Rafe continued his MBA studies at New York University and soon found his first job at a company that traded in metals. “I’d work five days a week and in the evenings attend my courses.” Meanwhile, Roberta launched her career as director of recreation for senior citizens. Eventually, they left New York, settling in the Teaneck area. “We were city kids and were attracted to this suburban area, with its private unattached houses, open spaces and even some unpaved roads. We were among the first people to move to this new area, which soon developed into a vibrant Jewish community.” After the company where Rafe was employed merged with a larger firm, Rafe and two others decided to branch out on their own. They opened their own

company, in the same field and it flourished. Some 30 years later, Rafe and his partners retired, leaving the still thriving company to the younger generation. Now the idea of *aliyah* began to take root.

Welcome to Israel

“My retirement is one of the high points of my life,” says Rafe. “I never expected to retire at age 67, but when it worked out that way, it was amazing!” One daughter already lived in Israel, making the transition easier. Their son and another daughter still live in the Teaneck area with their families. “I found it hard to move away from our children, but we continue to travel back for visits,” relates Roberta. “It was a fluke that we ended up in this amazing community, as for years we had rented vacation apartments in the north of the city. Then we ran into the Polaks, fellow Teaneckers, and they told us about this great neighborhood in the south of Netanya. We visited them at their home on the corner of Pierre Koenig, saw an apartment for sale, and the rest is history. We love the building and love this neighborhood. What a delightful place to retire! Nothing is better than retiring in Israel. Combined with the wonderful, welcoming SNAC community, this was a win-win decision,” say Rafe and Roberta. ●

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HaBayit Shel Benji

Because Every Soldier Deserves a Home and a Family

By Stephen Lambert



“HaBayit shel Benji (*Benji's Home*) is so much more than a home for lone combat soldiers – it's a paradise for us.” These heartfelt words from a lone combat soldier in the IDF's Special Forces ring loud and true among the 350 soldiers the Home has taken under its wing since its establishment in 2013. The Home was built in memory of Benji Hillman, a company commander in the Egoz Commando Unit, who was killed

in the Second Lebanon War only one month after his marriage. Hillman was well loved and known for the genuine care he showed for the wellbeing of his lone soldiers. In his wake, Hillman's family established HaBayit shel Benji in his hometown of Raanana, to continue his legacy and provide lone combat soldiers with support for every challenge and need they may encounter during and after their service in the IDF.

To date, the Home has expanded from a small project to a building twice the original size; it houses 87 lone soldiers, each with his/her own bedroom for the duration of army service. With the help of Raanana's volunteer network and loving staff, soldiers living there receive three meals a day, clean laundry each week, and the 24/7 support of a “family.” Some 1250 lone combat soldiers serve in the IDF, many from overseas and others

whose families in Israel cannot support them. These soldiers willingly risk their lives every day to protect the country from harm, and they do not deserve to come home from a grueling week of military service to an empty house, with dirty clothes and dishes, no food in the refrigerator, and bills they cannot afford to pay laid out on the table. At HaBayit shel Benji that never happens. Most are not afraid of the physical hardships or dangers they face in the army; they are afraid of being alone or they are afraid they will never have their own space to be themselves and let go of their stoic soldier roles for just a moment.

The emotional needs of lone soldiers must be addressed too, and no other facility does this as well as HaBayit shel Benji. The staff listens to each of the lone soldiers' unique problems, offering advice and expertise throughout their service, and guidance after they have been released from the army. The Home's guidance center has helped over 2000 lone soldiers find employment, apartments and furnishing, scholarships and more. Advisors accompany released lone soldiers through Israeli bureaucracy, job interviews, and college acceptance, to make their transition into Israeli life as smooth as possible. It is no wonder that 90 percent of the soldiers that pass through its doors remain in Israel, while among the general lone soldier population only 20-50 percent stay. The Benji Hillman Foundation would like to extend its hand to more lone soldiers – as the Home's full capacity leaves prospective soldiers waiting for upwards of nine months. Not enough rooms in the current building are available to accommodate all those interested in the Home, and the management does not want to turn any of them away. Therefore, HaBayit shel Benji has embarked on a project to build a second home for its lone soldiers adjacent to the first, with the same central location, volunteer network, and staff support that have contributed to the success of the first home. The new building will

house an additional 93 soldiers, with a public club room and garden. The guidance center and kitchen will be expanded as well. The project has been approved by the Raanana municipality and much of the eight million shekels required to begin construction has already been raised. “HaBayit shel Benji allowed me to be the best soldier I could be. It provided me with the support to go to an officer's training course and finish. I know that my service would have looked dramatically different were it not for Benji's Home,” Lieutenant B, a lone combat soldier from Canada in Paratroopers exclaimed. The Home hopes soon to give another 93 soldiers that same opportunity, and countless more the guidance they need to continue living in Israel after their service.



Lone combat soldiers devote their lives to help our country; the least that HaBayit shel Benji can do is offer them a proper home and a loving family. If you would like to bring this inspirational project to fruition, please contact: Joey@benjihillman.org or call - 050-7607742

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NEST for the Neighborhood

Over the last year the English-speaking organizations in Netanya have joined together to create an umbrella group called NEST (Netanya English Speakers Together). NEST aims to help English speakers navigate through municipal departments and government offices and to advocate on a local level on behalf of English speakers to all relevant bodies. Currently they are focusing on issues relating to Netanya traffic. I have been particularly concerned about repairs and improvements, that cannot be attended to via WhatsApp or Moked 106.

Six SNAC members have had trip-and-fall accidents on Pierre Koenig, HaGila and other local streets. The council also needs to address:

- tree-root damage on the sidewalks
- poor drainage along the road
- signage to stop illegal parking
- damaged bus shelters
- improvement of signage on the

tayelet to ensure pedestrian priority, with fines for scooters and electric bikes, piggy-backing passengers and riding without due care and attention

- We are also concerned that the new area on Ben Gurion Boulevard have adequate grass and park areas – similar to that at the Winter Lake Park and not become a concrete jungle as in the Piano area.

I have been assisted by Gareth Krieke who is a chartered surveyor and also by the new neighborhood committee called Nof HaTayelet Mitoret. Simon Monk is acting as liaison to the relevant councilman.

Graham Calvert

■ decisions ■

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The Story of Penashe

‘The Original Kosher Fun Food Stalls’

By Ashley Leboff



Penashe Shop Front

Penny and I were introduced to each other in 1985. We married in 1986 and in 1988 we celebrated the Bar Mitzvahs of our two oldest sons only 16 weeks apart: Grant in May and Jeremy in September. Penny’s family from New York were coming to Grant’s *simcha* and in order to make them feel at home, she suggested we serve them popcorn. Not a difficult decision (#1) you may think, but we soon discovered that in 1980s London, kosher popcorn did

not exist. We had a large lawn in our garden (backyard) and we erected a large marquee (tent) that sat 200 guests with a dance floor. Penny intended to cater it herself (isn’t that what any sane, working mother would do?). She decided to pop her own popcorn in a pareve saucepan and serve it on the night of the event. All we needed was a popcorn warmer... We eventually found one that the disco had used and we were in business. The popcorn warmer turned out to be

less than totally hygienic and I ended up cleaning it while the guests were arriving. (I was also dealing with the electricity short-circuiting every time the disco lights were turned on but that’s another story!) Anyway, we succeeded in providing the Americans with popcorn and everything went well, including the disco lights. Come Jeremy’s Bar Mitzvah, the Americans returned. This time we took an executive decision (#2) to actually purchase our own American Popcorn Machine. Penny, being the financial controller in the family, reckoned that we could amortise the cost of the machine over the younger siblings’ *simchas* (why wouldn’t we). We located a suitable importer, took a crash lesson from the delivery man on how to pop corn professionally and we were on our way. I am pleased to report both the popcorn and the *simcha* were a hit. Then something completely unexpected happened. With the Bar Mitzvahs behind us, life returned to normal, or nearly normal, because a couple who were guests at the Bar Mitzvah asked to borrow the popcorn machine for their own daughter’s Bat Mitzvah. In fact, they didn’t want to borrow it, they insisted on paying for its rental. A little unsure where this was taking us, we accepted their offer of payment. According to all reports, it proved a great success!

A Bold Decision

Penny and I looked at each other and she mused – what would happen if we put an advert in the Jewish Chronicle offering a kosher popcorn machine? We took the bold decision (#3) to place a 12-word announcement in the paper’s classified ads section and very slowly, we started to get responses! We needed a tradename and pinched an idea from my mother who always wrote in her diary ‘PenAsh’ (short for Penny and Ashley, get it?) when she was seeing us. We changed it to ‘Penashe’ to replicate the sound of ‘panache’ and we were off and running! The decision (#4) took seconds to make, not even a minute.



Taken at a family day out, corporate event A very young Jeremy grilling in the foreground

The enquiries were mainly for Bar and Bat Mitzvah disco parties on Sunday evenings, so delivering the equipment didn’t interfere with our day jobs. Boosted by our success, we responded to requests for a candyfloss (cotton candy) machine, which made us even more popular. Within a short time, we were booked to serve our popcorn and candyfloss ourselves at formal *simchas*, catered by kosher caterers and supervised by the London Beth Din. Although we lacked a kashrut license, we got away with it as long as we were supervised by the *shomer* on duty. We came to an understanding that in order to maintain kashrut, only we could set up and operate the equipment... Our Sundays were soon booked up and a couple of years after starting this ‘little side-line’ we found ourselves serving popcorn, candyfloss, waffles and pareve ice cream at a Yom Ha’atzmaut extravaganza promoted by the Zionist Federation at Wembley Stadium.

Win-Win Situation

Amid the mayhem, Rabbi Conway, Director of the KLBD (Kashrut Division of the London Beth Din) beckoned us

over to a quiet spot in the auditorium. We still remember his words: “We know exactly who you are and what you do. We believe that it would be in our joint interest to ‘formalize’ your association with the London Beth Din and get your own kashrut license.” Standing there, in the middle of Wembley Stadium, we took the decision (#5) to take up his invitation. It was a win-win for both Penashe and the KLBD. It meant we could serve our food anywhere without being under the auspices of a caterer’s *shomer*; on the KLBD’s side, they had a kosher fun food provider on their roll call to cater at Bar and Bar Mitzvah disco parties (too small for the formal caterers) where the parents would otherwise have served non-kosher pizzas and whatnot. With a KLBD *hechsher*, we expanded into serving American hot dogs (not boiled Viennas), burgers, steaks, chicken fillets, slush puppies, waffles, pareve ice cream and, of course, popcorn and candyfloss. Meanwhile our son Jeremy, who was out of his teens, had risen to a managerial position in a large food group and was looking to advance his career. Together we opened the Penashe Takeaway in Edgware serving

the same menu as our stalls and more. In the restaurant we were able to offer New York style salt beef (corned beef) sandwiches (we went to New York to learn how to cut and serve it), grilled chicken wings, fries, latkes, etc. Kosher customers loved the sheer thrill of ordering a burger and ‘milk’ shake (pareve of course).

“Time Out” Commendation

For three consecutive years Penashe featured in the best takeaway category in London’s Time Out magazine. One mystery shopper’s review exclaimed that he couldn’t tell the difference between what he called our non-milk, milk shakes and the real thing. Business boomed as people wanted to serve the same food that we prepared in the restaurant, at their own *simchas*. The business model proved to be highly successful. At times, Jeremy and I would be running different events at venues with our stalls while Penny managed the restaurant. When we opened the restaurant, Jeremy was single, footloose and fancy free. Then he met his wife-to-be, and soon their first son was born. Inevitably Jeremy decided that returning home to his wife and baby son smelling of burgers and fries was no longer for him and he decided to move into accountancy (# Oh no, that decision is not for this story, but suffice to say, he is now a partner, so it was a good one for him!) Penny and I couldn’t run the restaurant on our own so we closed it and decided (#6) to sell the business, which we accomplished in the year prior to making aliyah in 2015. So what happened next? Penashe rolls on. It is now owned by a young, dynamic couple who have expanded the Penashe food offering. More recently, we learned that they have many enquiries from the Bar and Bat Mitzvah boys and girls whom we served in the 1990s and 2000s. They are now parents organizing their own children’s *simchas* and remember us well. And so our decision to serve popcorn at our eldest son’s Bar Mitzvah carries on into the next generation. ●

■ decisions ■

A Tale on Three Continents

By Norma Zacks

In 2007 David and I returned to the UK from a yearlong stint in the USA. David had been asked to relocate to his company's New Jersey subsidiary to serve as sales and training director. This was quite an adventure. We were in our 50s and the furthest David had ever moved from his family home in Luton was three miles to our home when we married. For me, the move was about ten miles from St. Albans. Our son Shloime and his American wife Moriel were living in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, making the decision to relocate to New Jersey particularly appealing. The move was supposed to be permanent, however we had been there about a year when the company sold out and David was made redundant. With no work visa, we knew we had to return to England, but hung around a while to welcome our first grandson to the world. In 2011, we once again had to make a decision. Shloime and family were now in California and asked us to join them there. Shloime was now a US citizen and could apply for our immigration to the USA. We agreed that this would be a good move especially as David had re-trained and was a practicing clinical hypnotherapist. He believed he would have a good clientele in California. The immigration papers arrived and with them many doubts. I was concerned about the distance from our elder son Adam, and from my sister Sheila and David's sister Sharon and their families. The flight from the UK is long and the fares were continually rising. I had heard that as people get older travel gets harder and this really



Norma and David Zacks with Moriel and Shloime and family in the Golan

worried me. I had always wanted to live in Israel but David rightly said that would move us even farther from California. A whole lot of soul searching went on and I knew I really did not want to move to California. It would be great while the children were there but if they moved for any reason we would be stuck. If we were to move it would have to be to somewhere where we would have a life of our own, not dependent on the whereabouts of our children. Within a few weeks, the papers from the USA still not filled in, we received a phone call from Shloime: "You'll never guess what! We are making *aliyah*." I was not a bit surprised, although it had never been discussed and their decision was very sudden. Our next decision was easy. We would make *aliyah*. Shloime and Moriel came first in November 2012. On a Shabbat visit to Netanya, they discovered SNAC and realized that it would be a perfect fit for us. Shloime even looked for an apartment that would suit us in the area. We made *aliyah* in January 2014. Just a five-hour flight to see our families in the UK. We are both so pleased we made the decision as we could not be happier in Netanya and with our many good friends in SNAC. ●

No Such Thing as a Coincidence!

By Marcel Cohen

When my family left Egypt in 1956, we were allowed to take with us 50 Egyptian pounds per adult and 25 Egyptian pounds per child – for our family this amounted to the great sum of 300 pounds. Of course, that soon ran out and my parents had to seek employment. Neither could speak English fluently but both were blessed with a knowledge of mathematics – which has been passed down to my children and grandchildren. So for them, the jobs had to involve numbers. My mother was advised to seek employment as a clerk in Smithfield – the meat market. Not surprisingly, she was turned down from one place to another. At one office she was interviewed by a secretary. As in all previous encounters she was rejected and sheepishly made her way to the exit door. Just before she reached the door the secretary's boss emerged and was greeted by the secretary, "Yes, Mr. Rushbrook." On hearing his name, mum did a U-turn and said, "Is that Captain Rushbrook?" He replied: "Well, I was

Captain Rushbrook when I served in the army in Egypt." She then informed him that my father, Isaac Cohen, had served under him. He recalled my father and offered her a job! My father was a stockbroker in Egypt and Rothschild Bank was happy to offer him a job as a backroom clerk (no computers in 1956). One day a wealthy Jewish client spotted the new face and asked who my father was. He was described as a Jewish refugee from Egypt. On hearing this, the client asked my father what work he did in Egypt. Once he knew that he was a stockbroker, he asked my father what shares he would buy if he had access to funds. Now, despite his poor English, my father read the financial and business press copiously. He told the client that Nottingham Manufacturers, who supplied Marks & Spencer, had now invested heavily in the manufacture of women's tights and that his hunch was to buy that stock. A few months later the client returned. Following my father's advice, he had made a killing. Although there was no formal deal, the client gave my father what would have been his commission! This served as a deposit on the three-bedroom semidetached house in which I was raised! ●



Isaac and Louna Cohen

■ decisions ■

Forks in the Road

By Sharon and Jonathan Sherman



When you come to a fork in the road, take it! Americans will recognize this as one of the many brilliant adages of Yogi Berra, a famous baseball player and our neighbor in New Jersey (spoiler alert, no longer our neighbor). The message, of course, is to keep moving forward even if the path ahead is not clear. Children's weddings, Covid shutdowns and upcoming milestone birthdays. No shortage of life events competing for our attention during the next stage of our lives. No shortage of forks in our roads. The path we chose was to sell the house we had lived in for 32 years, the home we raised our children in and the site of so many wonderful memories. SNAC and our new friends are a definite magnet and we are looking forward to

spending more time with each of you in Netanya. Yet we could have held onto the house for longer. Why sell? It is a beautiful May Shabbat afternoon in West Orange and we are sharing a socially distanced lunch with friends. The talk moves to children and we listen attentively as our friends describe their children's *aliyah* plans. "Because if they do not take the plunge now, it will only get more difficult." The light goes on above Sharon's head. We should be firming up our *aliyah* plans! The light goes on above Jonathan's head. We need a plan! Time for the Shermans to actualize our *aliyah* dream, the dream we thought about often but put off for so many years. We were entrenched in our comfortable New York-New Jersey lifestyles. We had many close friends, a warm community and a lovely house. Change is hard. Moving out of one's comfort zone is even harder. We took a first step towards *aliyah* seven years ago when we began our search for a vacation home in Israel. We spent a Shabbat with Irith and Les Langer whom we miss dearly. Irith and Les opened their home to us and introduced us to the SNAC community. For the four pre-Covid years after purchasing our Netanya home, we juggled our strong desire to be in Netanya with our lives in the States. Our parents, our kids, our jobs, our *lives* were in the States. We were privileged to spend Yom Tovim in Netanya. *Aliyat Regel* we half-jokingly, half-lovingly, called it. Our hearts were firmly in Netanya. Then came the Covid travel closings and the reality of our situation was clear. Israel was closed to us. Our inability to return home helped us realize that tourist visas were not enough. Our journey will not be immediate. It will take time, but it is time to commit to *aliyah*. It was time to sell the house. ●

■ *decisions* ■

Moving Decisions

By Brenda Katten

*"Life is like riding a bicycle – to keep balance
you have to keep moving"*

Albert Einstein

Did Einstein have in mind “moving home” with this quote? There is no doubt that moving is one of the most challenging decisions we face in life. It is considered to be a traumatic experience coming third after the death of a close relative and divorce. John, my late husband, and I decided to move our home four times during a marriage that lasted 61 years. 1958 was the year our married life began in Mill Hill – a suburb of North West London; here we made life-long friends. We were fortunate to begin our marriage in a house that John, an architect, had designed for his parents’ retirement. His recently widowed mother generously suggested we have her home while she moved into a nearby



The House that John Built

apartment. However, John's dream was to build a house for our growing family which he eventually did. (This project was third in importance for John, following the design of two London synagogues. These undertakings fulfilled a personal need born in his memory of the flames of his father's synagogue in Bamberg set afire by Germans when he was 10 years old.) Moving to the new house was easy as all aspects (choice of bathrooms, kitchens etc.) were handled by John. Life continued as hitherto because we remained in Mill Hill with our good friends from the Mill Hill Shul.

Downsizing

As the years passed and our children began to leave home we found ourselves living in a big house – with multiple responsibilities. The time had come to move into something smaller. The year was 1994, John had just sold his architectural practice and we were spending more time in Israel where our son and his wife now lived. John was still not quite ready to retire; he decided to rent a small office in Maida Vale. At the time I was working professionally as a relationship counselor for the London Marriage Guidance Council based in the West End. I had also just become chair of the Hillel Foundation working closely with Jewish students. The offices of Hillel and the Union of Jewish Students

were housed in the same building near Euston. It made good sense to live in the vicinity where our activities were centered; we chose to move to St. John's Wood.

We recognized that it would be a challenge to uproot ourselves from the comfort zone of close friends and a community where our synagogue started in a house and evolved into a purpose-built building designed by John; it would not be easy to share the news of our impending departure from Mill Hill. Finally, we plucked up courage to share our decision with our friends, which was met with shock: “How can you consider moving out of the area where you have lived since 1958 – you are part and parcel of the community.” Yes, it was a big change but the first night in our new apartment we looked at each other with a sense of relief; while hard to leave the beautiful house John had created it was a consolation not to have to continue with its upkeep.

We joined South Hampstead Synagogue which proved to be one of our best ever shul experiences. The overriding decision to join this particular synagogue was its wonderful rabbi, Shlomo Levin, who was in the business of outreach; he attracted the professional yuppies who came to shul every Shabbat from far and wide. We became one of seven families who had open house on Shabbat, often entertaining young professionals. It was refreshing to have them seated around our Shabbat table where we always enjoyed a lively conversation.

“Brenda will be a nobody”

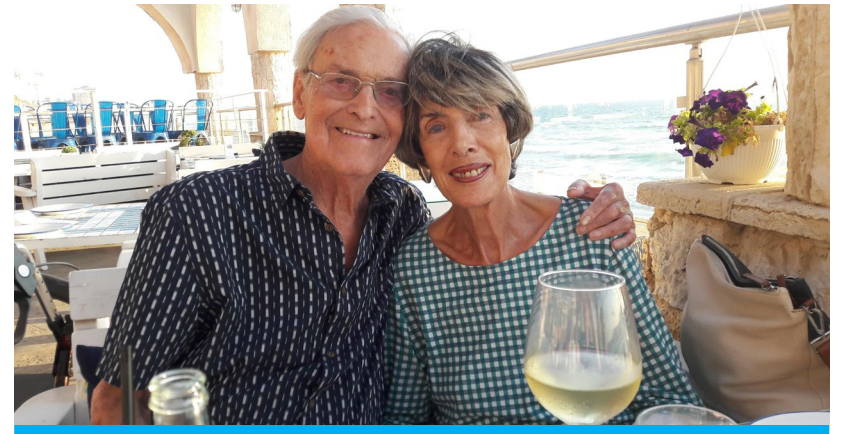
Four years on we decided the time had come for us to move to Israel. Our final meeting with the Jewish Agency shaliach proved a somewhat disturbing experience especially when he turned to John and said “Brenda was a ‘macher’ in the UK but when she arrives in Israel she will be a ‘nobody.’ You will have to be especially nice to her – take her for walks on the beach, to concerts and restaurants.” Not the best of messages to give a couple about to change countries. The reality? John, who thought he would retire, was approached by friends

and friends of friends in our new home in Herzlia, who wanted their homes updated; he was more than happy to oblige. Coupled with his love of painting – he found the Israeli light particularly conducive to creating beautiful art – he occupied his days in a most productive and fulfilling manner.

I was seconded by World WIZO to become its Public Affairs chairperson. Aside from being part of the Israel Delegation to the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women for seven consecutive years, I also had the great privilege of speaking to WIZO Federations throughout the world.

Welcome to Netanya

Our last move was from Herzlia to Netanya in 2014...again the same question: “How can you move from where you have lived for so long?” The move was exceedingly positive. We joined the warm welcoming community of SNAC and made numerous new friends. How rewarding it was that,



John z"l and Brenda

although somewhat older than most, we were welcomed and accepted. Without doubt the biggest decision was our move to Israel, which has proved to be one of the most exciting and happiest periods in our lives. During the last nine months of John's life – of which we were both aware – when asked how he felt, John's immediate response was: "I feel

fortunate, privileged and happy to be living in Israel.”

Decisions to move come with much soul searching but our experience proved it was refreshing and stimulating, and offered new opportunities and new friends. Could this be one interpretation of Einstein’s quote? ●

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■ decisions ■

Our Elopement: The Decision of a Lifetime

By Roy Pinchot



In August 1964 my younger sister, Gail, graduated from the Art Institute of Chicago, and as a graduation present, I took her on a tour of the art museums in Europe. During the three previous years, I had dated Ginger, an ardent Zionist, who therefore advocated we include Israel in our trip. She made the idea more enticing by volunteering to join us for the latter part of the trip. Gail and I spent a few months traveling throughout Europe, taking in the visual splendor of the most famous art museums. It was during this time, experiencing so many interesting sights and adventures without Ginger by my side, that I realized she was the woman with whom I wanted to share my life. I decided, if she would have me, we'd be married during our stay in Israel. When Ginger finally joined us in Greece I did

not mention anything about possible matrimony. I needed to make sure we could actually get married during our month's stay in Jerusalem. Arriving in Israel, I naively thought there would be no problem getting permission for a wedding; after all, we were both Jewish – her family was Reform and mine Conservative. Little did I realize that between dream and fulfillment lies the actual State of Israel! Ginger, a girlfriend of hers from L.A., my sister and I found lodging at a small pension off King David in Jerusalem. The pension's desk clerk thought I had quite the arrangement, walking in with three beautiful young women; he gave me a wink to show his approval. He would have been shocked to know I was about to commit to what I hoped would be a life-long relationship with

the blond one.

My first order of business was to find out if my dream was possible. The previous summer, Ginger had visited Israel and studied with Rav Noach Weinberg, the founder of Aish Ha Torah. Knowing how much Ginger respected him, it was natural for me to turn to him for advice. I asked if I could see him privately as I had an important topic to discuss. He didn't hesitate telling me I could meet with him on the bus during his ride from his home to the Convention Center, as he was lobbying the Agudah for money to create a Baal Tshuva yeshiva. So for the next two mornings, I secretly met him on the bus. After telling him I wanted to get married in Jerusalem within three weeks, he thought I was crazy! We would need the approval of the Jerusalem Chief Rabbinate, requiring documents proving we were Jewish and unmarried – documents we didn't possess. He reluctantly gave me the Rabbinate's address as he rolled his eyes, murmuring under his breath, "It'll never happen."

It Was Time to Propose

Undeterred, I proceeded to locate the run-down, shabby office of the Jerusalem Rabbinate, which ended up being above two retail stores. Explaining what I wanted, I was taken to Jerusalem's Chief Rabbi, who asked for our papers from America. I explained we had no papers. "Why not get married in Tel Aviv," he suggested. "They're not very particular – not like us!" I said I hadn't traveled thousands of miles to get married in any city other than Jerusalem. After a moment of silence, he scribbled a note, handing it to me and sent me upstairs to an office on the top floor. There sat an old man in a kapote who spoke no English. Was this the end of my dream? I got up from my chair, walked to the window and began humming the tune for Hoshea et Amecha. Without a word passing between us, he jumped up, put his arm around me, wrote a note and sent me back downstairs. After reading the old man's scribble, the Chief Rabbi declared, "You have a Bet Din appointment tomorrow to which you must bring the woman and two witnesses." It was time to ask Ginger if

■ decisions ■



she would marry me!

At the site of David's Tomb, I nervously popped the question. Being a big tease, Ginger said she would think about it, but after a few seconds agreed, "Yes." First hurdle cleared. The next day our two witnesses, Rav Noach Weinberg and Rav Nota Shiller, head of Ohr Sameach yeshiva, escorted us to the Bet Din. After a series of questions, which we could not answer to the three judges' satisfaction and, in fact, caused them to roll over in laughter, we were sent from the court, leaving the witnesses with the judges. After what felt like an eternity, Rav Noah emerged, announcing the judges were so astonished at our audacity, they concluded we must be sincere – our nuptials were authorized and Noah Weinberg was given a one-day state license to marry us.

An \$80 Wedding

We found a wonderful small hotel named Pension Reich in Bet HaKarem for our wedding venue. Ginger rented a Swiss lace dress in Mea Shearim for \$20, and we invited 10 boys from the Hevron Yeshiva to make our *minyan*. On the day of the wedding, my sister and I filled a taxi with flowers and decorated the entire pension courtyard. However, just before we were ready to begin the wedding, Rav Weinberg noticed the wife of Israel's Chief Rabbi arriving at the pension. It seems that all of the rabbis were on vacation that August week, including the Chief Rabbi, who had a penthouse apartment at the pension. His Rebbitzin asked what was happening in the courtyard, and Rav Noah explained that a crazy couple of kids came from America to get married in Israel. Her eyes lit up! "I'll ask my husband if he wants to perform the wedding," she said enthusiastically. OK, change of plans! Rabbi Untermann, the Chief Rabbi, soon arrived and agreed to be the Mesader Kiddushin. WOW! First, he needed to interview me. He began by asking me in five different languages if I spoke each one – to which I replied, "No," five times. Finally, he asked in perfect Oxford tones, "Do you speak English?" Gratefully, I exclaimed, "Yes!" "Well, why didn't you say so?" I was knocked over. I didn't know he had been the Chief Rabbi of England before coming to Israel. Donned in his tall black top-hat, Rav Untermann married us under a canopy of flowers, and our 25 guests enjoyed a four-course meal accompanied by joyous dancing – all for a total bill of \$80. Fifty-eight years later, B'H, we can say, "Our elopement was the best decision each of us ever made." ●

~ Dear SNAC

The seventeen months that elapsed between my leaving Israel in August 2020 after the death of my father Aubrey and finally returning in January 2022, were among the hardest of my life. Being barred from entering the country to observe shloshim and the first yahrzeit, and to deal with my father's affairs was very difficult. This was softened by SNAC's Mishna Yomi shiur, which I attended in person while saying kaddish during shiva. I found a group of friendly people who met either in person or on Zoom, especially when Israel was in lockdown and public gatherings were forbidden. Once I returned to Manchester my attendance became solely virtual, but the group's companionship helped maintain my connection with Israel and SNAC. Recently, when I finally made it back to Netanya, just before Shabbat services were renewed at SNAC, almost

everyone who walked into shul came over to welcome me back to Israel and say how glad they were to see me. I knew then that I was back home! Thank you to SNAC for the welcome, and a special thank you to David, Ed, and Graham, stalwarts of the Mishna Yomi shiur for keeping the flame of Israel and SNAC alive in north Manchester. Whereas Moshe said to Pharaoh 'Let My People Go!,' in 2020-21 those of us outside Israel were shouting 'Let My People In!' Baruch Hashem we are in, and I hope that this Pesach is the first of a forever unbroken run of chaggim when we can visit friends and family without fear of lockdown or closed borders. Chag Sameach. ● Gareth Kreike



■ decisions ■

‘Bashert’ or Free Will?

By Issy Zuckerbrod

I have a recurring debate with my wife. Is something inevitable because it was fated to happen (*bashert*), or, as I believe, do we all have free choice and therefore nothing is inevitable? I am reminded of Rabbi Jonathan Sack’s z”l meeting with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Rabbi Sacks began as follows: “In the situation that I find myself...” The Rebbe abruptly interrupted: “You don’t find yourself in any position, you put yourself in that position.” So where I find myself today was not fate but a combination of factors, the majority of which were the result of conscious decisions at various crossroads in my life and also of the environment in which I lived. I was not responsible for the fact that I was born in Poland in 1945 to parents who had hidden underground for two years and had lost two children to the Nazis. Nor was I responsible for ending up in England in 1947. The schools I went

to were not chosen by me, nor was the environment in which I was raised. My mother wanted me to be a dentist, and spent a great deal of time trying to make me right-handed; she had never heard of a left-handed dentist. She failed. I am still left-handed. Our family doctor made many home visits to us due to my childhood asthma. My mother had absolute faith in him, revered him to the point of adulation. He also had a red Jaguar. With all that in my background and having an "Ima Polaniyah" (Jewish mother), what else could I have become except a doctor?

The Worst Day of Their Life

Then came the day my parents called the worst day of their life. A complete game-changer. Regularly, on my way to shul on Shabbat afternoons I would see young people singing and dancing in front of a building which I soon learnt was the Bnei Akiva Bayit. It totally captured my



Issy and Sue Zuckerbrod with children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren

imagination and from that moment on my parents had lost me. So I found myself at Manchester University Medical School and I married the head of Manchester Bnei Akiva. Was it inevitable, free choice, or just the result of circumstances? And with a Bnei Akiva and Holocaust background, was it inevitable that sooner or later *aliyah* would become a serious option?

Blackmail and Guilt

Do I give in to my parents’ blackmail? “After all we have been through, do you want to leave us and take our grandchildren to Israel? Who knows when we will be able to see you! There are too many doctors in Israel, making a living would be difficult, you will have to go into the army, there are terrorists, the country is perpetually at war!” Or do I make a decision based on my beliefs, my awareness of Jewish history, and the inevitable conclusions I drew from the Holocaust that Israel was the only place to live? There was no rabbi I could turn to, no leader to give me guidance. I had to make the decision by myself. With a heavy heart and a surfeit of guilt feelings I decided to make *aliyah*. Within a very short time of arriving in Israel, my parents bought an apartment in Netanya,

deciding to divide their time between me in Netanya and my sister in Manchester. My parents had the best years of their lives in Netanya and indeed tried to persuade my sister to make *aliyah* (as yet to no avail!). After 42 years in Israel, I know I made the correct decision. Seeing the successes of my children and grandchildren in all their pursuits made that clear. The greatest confirmation of the correctness of my decision came from my children when they said, “Daddy, thank you for bringing us here.” ●



Issy and Sue Zuckerbrod

■ decisions ■

Definitely ‘Bashert’

By Sue Zuckerbrod

Unlike my husband Issy, I believe that everything in life is *bashert*, that when reaching a crossroads in life, no matter which path you take, eventually you will end up where you were destined to be. My first trip to Israel was in 1970. My friend and I spent our first night in a Tel Aviv hotel. The next day, as we sat in the lobby, a pile of books was delivered to the hotel. I picked up one and saw that it was a classified Yellow Pages directory. At that time, I was the telephone sales manager in Leeds for a company that published the Yellow Pages directories in the UK. I took down all the details of the Israeli company that produced the directory. On that trip I fell in love with Israel and decided to make *aliyah*. Back in England, I telephoned the Israeli company and they sent a representative to England to interview me. I was offered an amazing job. However, my mother z”l was living alone in Sunderland. She was not a well woman. I told her my plans to move to Israel and begged her to come with me. She refused. I had to choose between a career in Israel and *kibud em* (honoring my mother). My mother won.

My life then took a different path. I left Yellow Pages and furthered my career in advertising, first as classified manager for a newspaper in Greenwich and then as a director for a public company that specialized in advertising for hotels. I married and had two of my four children and decided to start my own business. However, my priorities changed again as I lay in bedrest trying to save the life of child number 3 inside me. I made the decision not to start a new business. I became a housewife and involved myself in voluntary work. I reached another completely

unexpected crossroads, when my second daughter, then aged 2, was diagnosed with cancer. Again, my life changed dramatically, I gave up all my commitments to care for my sick daughter and my family. My next six years revolved around monthly hospital visits, operations, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy -- without asking for counseling or support, unlike other parents in the oncology department. Then I met Frances Winegarten z”l, who had recovered from two bouts of cancer. She persuaded me to start a cancer support group for the Jewish community where there was a tremendous need. Eight months later Chai Lifeline Cancer Care was incorporated as a registered charity. Seven months later my brave daughter lost her battle with cancer and died one month short of her eighth birthday. After her death, I had to decide whether to give up my involvement with anything related to cancer and the bitter memories it evoked, or to carry on. I decided that something good had to come from the tragedy of her death. With Natalie z”l as our inspiration, Chai grew from strength to strength. Eight years later tragedy struck again – my husband was diagnosed with a brain tumor and died, aged 49.

Running Chai was my salvation as life was very difficult, lonely, and challenging, raising the children on my own. One day a neighbor telephoned proposing a shidduch – a doctor in Israel who had lost his wife. She told me that if it worked out, I must agree to move to Israel. After receiving my children’s blessing, I agreed to meet him and a few months later made the decision that changed my life for good – I agreed to marry Issy Zuckerbrod! After many crossroads and many decisions, I was finally able to achieve my dream to make *aliyah* and fulfill my destiny – my *bashert*! ●

Issy Zuckerbrod’s parents at matzeva for their two children who were killed by the Nazis



SNACpackers



Iceland – A Land of Contradictions

By Alan Lewis



Alan and Miriam Lewis
in the Lava Tunnel, Iceland

Three generations of Lewises formed part of a group touring southern Iceland, quartered in a boutique hotel, not too near anywhere. When we set out from Keflavik Airport at about 15:30 local time, it was some 16+ hours from the alarm clock in Netanya. We could have been driving on the moon. No trees. No grass. Just volcanic rocks with occasional moss and lichen and a sulphurous smell in the air. Bleak is an understatement.

Upon arrival, we went to the Blue Lagoon. I had some romantic notion of a sub-tropical inlet from the sea, touched by the Gulf Stream, with warm deep blue water. Oh dear! How wrong! It is, actually, a very large natural depression in the volcanic ‘moonscape’ that fills naturally with warm, geothermally

heated water – nothing sub-tropical about it. The depression contains nine million liters of water, which changes naturally every four hours and is pale blue because of the sulphur. The air temperature is lower than the water temperature and so a thin layer of steam hovers over the lagoon. It is a major tourist attraction and after all those hours of traveling, it was a fascinating experience.

Water, water everywhere...

Glaciers cover about 20 percent of the land surface of Iceland. Unlike the crystalline white glaciers of South America shimmering in the sunshine, most Icelandic glaciers have streaks of black, accumulated dust from ancient volcanic eruptions. Running water abounds wherever you go. We saw several of the country’s 8000 waterfalls, including the Gold Waterfall where, every second, 300 cubic meters of melted glacier water pour over the falls. The surface water seeps through Iceland’s myriad cracks and crevices to be superheated by the magna core and then returns to the surface as steam and boiling water, manifested as boiling mud and super-heated water spouts or geysers. The small town of Hveragerdu, population 1800 souls, has been constructed on the geothermal plain and valley. The geothermal heat generates their electricity and heats their homes and 50,000 sq. meters of greenhouses. So, apart from some infrastructural works and the installation of electricity turbines, all this energy is free. It’s a fascinating concept. We boiled some eggs in the naturally boiling water.

Like 1950s London

The capital Reykjavik is a pleasant, modern city that has evolved from a



A small iceberg in the Glacier Lagoon

fishing village over the past 100 years. Society here is almost free of crime or terrorism. It’s all rather as I remember London in the 1950s when life was simpler, gentler and more secure. One of the highlights of our trip was a visit to the Glacier Lagoon on a warm and sunny day. Thirty years ago, the glacier reached the seashore but, with global warming, it has retreated some hundreds of meters. The glacier itself covers 10,000 sq. km which is very nearly equivalent to half the land mass of Israel. The Icelandic population is 369,000 of whom 232,000 live in Reykjavik, so only 137,000 Icelanders reside in the rest of this large island. Icelanders enjoy free healthcare, free education from age 1½ to age 16. They get cheap electricity and heat, both at home and in the street, there are no motorways, very few international retail chains and no railway system. They seem to live simple lives with simple tastes. This really is a land of contradictions. ●

Two Days in the Stunning Galilee

By Charles Green

Living in a beautiful, historical paradise, travel in Israel can be as rewarding as an overseas trip. For about the same time it takes to drive to Ben Gurion Airport in rush hour, Toni and I arrived in stunning Galilee for a two-day

Mitzpe Hashalom, Golan Heights

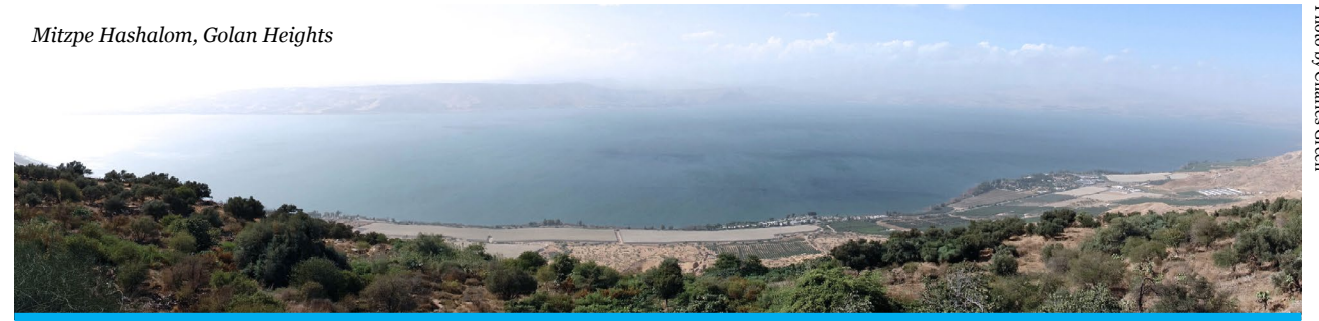


Photo by Charles Green

sightseeing holiday.

Our first stop was at one of the most important Jewish pilgrimage sites in Israel, the Tomb of Maimonides, the Rambam. An impressive tower over the visitor center could be seen from afar. The Rambam was first buried in Egypt, but just like Jacob and Joseph, his last wish was to eventually be buried in Israel. Other famous rabbis are also buried here: the Rambam’s father Rabbi Maimon, his grandson Rabbi David Hanagid, Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai, the Shelah HaKadosh, and others from the Talmudic era. Women and men of all ages come to pray here. Nearby were also the burial sites of the famous Rabbi Akiva and the Rachmal. Just a few minutes’ drive away, in the center of Tiberias, is the Dona Gracia Museum. Situated in a hotel of the same name, it offers an excellent exhibit of the life of Dona Gracia, a heroine and inspirational leader of the 16th century who built synagogues and yeshivas in

Istanbul to help thousands of refugees to return to Judaism. Her dream was to establish a state in the land of Israel. She came to Tiberias, which was then a ghost town and, with her vast fortune, began to rebuild it.

We had been looking forward to having evening dinner at our favorite Chinese restaurant in Israel, the Begoda, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. However, unexpectedly, the hotel we had booked offered us a free evening dinner. We had a most difficult decision to make: to forfeit the free dinner, or to have the Chinese meal at lunchtime. We decided on the latter.

We drove up the very steep, winding road to the high basalt cliffs of the Southern Golan Heights, above untamed gardens of a beautiful nature reserve, for spectacular views of the Sea of Galilee from Mitzpe Hashalom. From there, on a clear day, one could see Mt. Hermon, the hills of Galilee, Mt. Tabor and the Jordan Valley.

Nearing sunset, I couldn’t resist having a swim in the Kinneret, which is at its highest point in living memory, while watching the sun set over the hills of Galilee.

The following morning after a quick swim in the hotel’s pool, we set out on the second part of our journey, to Safed. It was sad to see this ancient city, with its famous synagogues, art galleries and restaurants mainly closed down due to the lack of tourists.

On our journey back to Netanya we stopped at the Golani Memorial, at the Golani Interchange, and at Eshkol Reservoir, the largest freshwater reservoir in the country. Although Israel is one of the smallest countries in the

world in length and width, it is the deepest country in the world in history. What an amazing place to live!! ●

A Long-Awaited Cruise

By Iresine Woolf

In mid-October David and I flew to Athens with Robert and Carolyn Casselson to join a cruise, sailing from Athens to Athens, visiting a different island each day. We had vouchers from our previous cruise which had been abruptly interrupted by the onset of the dreaded Covid 19 pandemic. Boarding the Azamara Quest, we were immediately relieved to see the ship had been completely refurbished at great cost while out of action for well over a year. We felt safe and secure on the spotless ship, which strictly followed all the required health protocols. Kusadasi in Turkey was a great disappointment; it was basically like being in the middle of a scrum of competing shopkeepers! ➔



(l to r) David Woolf, Carolyn Casselson, Iresine Woolf and Robert Casselson in Mykonos

Photo by Charles Green



Charles and Toni Green at
the Rambam Memorial



Holocaust memorial sculpture in Thessaloniki, Greece

→ We loved Rhodes, enjoying our visit to the synagogue and museum there, as well as Crete where we joined a tour of the island of Spinalonga. During the first half of the 20th century, this island was a leper colony and the streets and even the church from that period have been retained. We learned a good deal about life in that era. Thessalonika was a highlight with its Jewish history and museum. And Santorini, with its stunning blue and white buildings, is always a favorite. Each of the Greek islands has its own charm and we had a wonderful relaxing time. The visit to the Acropolis in Athens was a brilliant finale to a long awaited cruise. ●

Magic in Eilat
By Ephry Eder

Magic. That was the only word to describe the long Shabbat Shira weekend we shared at the Club Hotel in Eilat. At least 1000 persons were there including a SNAC contingent consisting of Charles and Toni Green, Ephry and Terrie Eder, Issy and Sue Zuckerbrod, and Ronnie and Linda Kaye. The magic was the spiritual uplift we



Streets of Spinalonga

each experienced from the terrific performances. First, almost as a warmup, on Thursday evening Shwekey performed his amazing Hebrew pop songs with stunning staging, assisted for a couple of songs by the renowned Chazan Yitzchak Meir Helfgot. Friday evening's Kabbalat Shabbat was in the hands of Chazan Helfgot, accompanied by an excellent choir, expertly conducted by Rafi Biton – 25 choristers including 6-8 youngsters with high treble voices, performing solos that were simply heavenly.



With Chazan Helfgot in Eilat.

Shabbat morning Chazan Helfgot and the choir presented a beautiful rendition of both Shacharit and Musaf. Shacharit started at 7:30am, broke at 11am for breakfast, and continued with Musaf at 12:15 until it concluded at 3pm. For us all, the principal highlights were the prayers for the State of Israel and the Israel armed forces. As those prayers began, the young boys were nowhere to be seen. Suddenly, at the passage referring to protection by heaven, those high treble voices rang out from upper windows at the back of the auditorium in which we were davening. It was as if the angels themselves were joining in. Magical indeed, and many of us were moved to tears. Our emotions remained on a high throughout the day and prompted us all to join in lustily in the zemirot over lunch. The choir performed again Shabbat afternoon, and following Motzei Shabbat another excellent concert was presented with Avraham Fried singing many Chassidic-style tunes, with music directed by Yuval Stopple. The show was exhilarating and professional: great lighting effects and emotive wide-screen backdrops changing continuously, with high volume sound that made the heart beat faster. We all agreed it was a sensational magical Shabbat, accompanied by great food throughout. An exceptional shared memory. ●

Photo by Charles Green



Orrie and Cynthia Lovat, Alex and Gloria Deutsch, Lee and Gill Heron, Stephen and Annette Lambert, Louis and Aviva Frydman, Charles and Toni Green, Ephry and Terrie Eder

Holiday of a Lifetime

By Gloria Deutsch

Since the Abraham Accords, thousands of Israelis have visited Dubai and, not to be outdone, seven SNAC couples decided to have a look for themselves. We joined the group organized by Joey and Vera Freudman of Ophir tours.

Being in a friendly Arab country whose inhabitants seemed delighted to welcome the hordes of Israelis who have descended was an amazing experience. We saw all the sights including the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building and Expo 2020 where we took pride in the Israel flag flying among those of all the nations. Our itinerary included gold markets, spice markets, museums, flower gardens and the world's largest mall and all agreed it was the holiday of a lifetime. ●



Photo by Charles Green

Pesach Greetings

- Marilyn & David Ashton • Norman A. Bailey & Barbara P. Billauer • Laraine & Roy Barnes • Birgitte Savosnick & Michael Baziljevich • Myriam & Howard Beenstock & Family • Brenda & Eric Brett • Belinda & Graham Calvert • Carolyn & Robert Casselson • Lesley & Roy Cohen • Shirley & Marcel Cohen • Ros & Tony Cole • Sheila & Graham Davies • Sylvia & David Fellerman • Gertie & Morris Forman • Reva & Mike Garmise • Toni & Charles Green • Miriam & Yisraol Haber • Lorraine & Mark Hamburger • Gillian & Lee Heron • Brenda Katten • Linda & Ronnie Kaye • Sandra & David Kibel • Ros & Martin Landau • Tamar & Marc Lesnick • Haya & David Lewi • Miriam & Alan Lewis • Karen & Julian Lewis • Shosh & Stuart Lewis • Ann & David Marks & Family • Dorothy & Stanley Mason • Joyce, Alan & Emma Mays • Ayana Jazanovich & Meir Nisim • Elaine & Bernard Oster • Marcia & Nate Peretzman • Ginger & Roy Pinchot • Angela & Peter Redstone • Donna & Sheldon Reich • Roberta & Rafe Safier • Julian & Clarice Saitowitz • Eric & Barbara Salamon • Pam & Mickie Sallmander • Simone & John Sless • Tina & David Son • Barbara & Edward Susman • Mindy & Avi Tokayer • Jenny & Leslie Wagner • Barbara & Paul Westbrook • Shelli Weisz • Barbara & Brian Wolkind • Iresine & David Woolf • Norma, David, Shloime, Moriel & Adam Zachs • Molly & Jack Zwanziger • Sue & Issy Zuckerbrod



■ something good ■

Something Good

An Angel Called Shlomi

By Reva Garmise

A not-so-funny-thing happened on the way to my ultrasound. It was early on a sunny November morning as we headed out for a medical appointment in Tel Aviv. Just a few minutes away from home, on Ben-Gurion Street, a young teenager in a rush to get to school rode his bike across the road, in front of our car, and in the blink of an eye our front right tire was impaled on his bike. Mike jumped out of the car and a guy named Shlomi jumped out of the car immediately to our right. I followed, not quite jumping, but very much praying that the child sprawled on the asphalt was alive. He was. Meanwhile two or three other good Samaritans who had left their cars offered to help. The bicyclist was conscious and telling everyone that he was OK and didn't need an ambulance. Someone brought him water. Shlomi, apparently a medic and definitely an angel, checked out the boy's leg, which was hurting, while another person called an ambulance. All the do-gooders remained as an ambulance and then a police car arrived. Photos were taken, evidence given and offers of help continued. The whole sordid event provided SNAC members with an interesting start to their tiyul as their bus passed by and they saw Mike in the middle of what was clearly the scene of an accident. Although relieved the child was alive, I was distressed, knowing full well I was going to miss my precious appointment. It is no small task scheduling a test or procedure in Israel.



Eventually, the cyclist's father arrived, the ambulance took the child away, the police helped extricate the bike from our badly punctured tire and only Shlomi remained. He guided us to a side road where we were going to change the tire. But our tire-changing paraphernalia was incomplete. Fortunately, Shlomi had everything that was needed and would not leave us until the deed was done (by him, of course – when you are

old, you are sometimes treated as helpless.) We were certainly shaken by the trauma of colliding with a schoolboy on a bike. But at the same time we were overwhelmed by the pure altruism and goodness of the other drivers who took the time to help the child and us. For close to an hour and a half, Shlomi calmly and confidently took care of the child, gave evidence to the police, reassured us and even changed our poor punctured tire. Before leaving, the angel said to Mike, "If there is anything else you need, you have my number. Don't hesitate to call."

A Covid Miracle

By Gillian Heron

A Covid nightmare. For two years we had not found a window of opportunity to meet up with our English children. Oliver, now four years old, was a baby the last time we'd held him. The possibility of getting together with our children in Cyprus seemed miraculous and we'd barely had time to get excited at the prospect, before boarding our 40-minute flight for a much belated family reunion. We will never forget the joy of being able to fall into each other's arms. For so long we had managed to control our separation frustrations and just tried to appreciate seeing one another via our daily Zoom calls. And now, here we were, together, relaxing in a beautiful hotel in Pathos with every comfort possible for both adults and children. That 7:30 tap on the door each morning signaled precious time for us to be with Oliver before the exciting distractions of the day began. One huge advantage of our 10 days together was the total release from any domesticity. The freedom to make up for lost time was a bond so strong that every moment together was one to savor.



Gill and Lee Heron with their daughter Karen, son-in-law Charles and grandson Oliver in Cyprus

■ something good ■

Initially, we thought we could even improve on this wonderful reunion by including James and family. But James pointed out that this was our time to devote to Karen, Charles and Oliver. And how right he was! This horrendous pandemic has taught us many life lessons: to appreciate every good moment; to enjoy family and friends when restrictions permit; to slow down our pace of life; and when situations become difficult during our changing Covid existence, to accept that "it is what it is."

An 'Israel Moment'

By Roy Pinchot

A few months ago, Ginger and I were on the number 7 bus on our way to the Netanya Central Bus Station. Near the rear of the bus sat an elderly man in a wheelchair, accompanied by a young caregiver. As the bus headed north on Smilansky Street, the caregiver pressed the red STOP button, indicating that the bus needed to allow the caregiver and her charge to exit at the next bus stop. The driver, a lovely young Arab woman named Bahia, pulled the bus into the stop, opening the rear doors for the passengers to

exit. Allowing other passengers to exit first, the caregiver unbuckled the wheelchair and moved to lower the ramp, positioning it for the wheelchair to descend. Noticing that the caregiver was not strong enough to handle the aged man and the wheelchair, Bahia left her seat and walked to the rear of the bus, coming to the caregiver's aid. Bahia lowered the ramp, took control of the chair, and wheeled the elderly man off the bus. As we all watched, Bahia went further with this act of kindness by continuing to push the wheelchair uphill on the sidewalk until she could park it on level ground, set the brakes, and await the caregiver. She then returned to our bus, raised and secured the ramp and walked from the rear to her driver's seat. As she walked forward, everyone on the bus spontaneously broke into enthusiastic applause in appreciation of her acts of kindness. In response, her beautiful face lit up with a smile of gratitude and humility. This was an Israeli moment!



Bus driver Bahia

Welcome Aboard!

SNAC is delighted to welcome 13 new families to our community:

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Ruth and Simon Adler

Judy and Zev Berman

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Linda and Lipa Sireling

Jessica Blazer

Sheila and Graham Davies

Anna and Leonardo Gewertz

Wendy and Tyrone Zinman

Eva and David Engles

■ something good ■

Zooming into Gaza

By Mickie Sallmander

As a medical ultrasound professional, my duties include teaching vascular surgeons the use of ultrasound for a particular surgical leg procedure. My teaching is on behalf of one of the world's largest medical companies, as part of its training program. Back in October (2021), I received a request from the company asking if I would teach my course to vascular surgeons in Gaza. Wow, interesting question. I had so many thoughts floating around in my head, most of them relating to my personal safety and security. At the same time, I saw an opportunity to "practice what I preach." I believe that the best thing we can do for the safety and security of the State of Israel is to raise the standard of living for the Palestinian people. Nobody wants to live next door to a neighbor who is unemployed, poor and under-educated, with poor healthcare. A desperate neighbor without any prospects is a dangerous neighbor. It is also known that if you raise the standard of living for a person, family, or even a whole generation, the number of children per family decreases. So it is a win-win situation. We can live in a safer, more secure country and the Palestinians can enjoy improved social and economic

prospects. So I responded that I would be happy to consider giving the seminar. To my delight, the company first wanted to know if I could give part of the hands-on course via Zoom. Immediately I felt a bit calmer and my vivid visions about taking a cab into Gaza disappeared. After reworking the course material a bit, I was ready to Zoom into Gaza. So how was it? Well, let's say the course did not go as smoothly as we had hoped. The first hour was spent on technical difficulties. Then it became apparent that physicians in Gaza have different educational backgrounds from their counterparts in Israel. The physicians in my group had studied in Russia and Jordan where they did not use English-language medical books. So once we got past the technical difficulties we discovered that their English was very poor and filling in with Hebrew was not an option. However, after a while, we found a way to communicate in basic English, with lots of repetitions and hand gestures. Why am I sharing my experience of a poorly executed medical seminar with physicians in Gaza? Because the world has a view of Israel as a racist country, "an apartheid state" and a cruel occupier. But we, as a country, do so much for other peoples both here in Israel and around the world. And this information is seldom publicized, leading to prejudice and condemnations of us. What other country in the world would teach a course the same year they experienced a war with the other side? What other country would be pummeled by rockets in the spring but in the fall teach a course to the other side? I can't think of any country in the world, other than our own State of Israel. ●



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■ my aliyah ■

My Aliyah

Ayana and Meir Nisim

By Reva Garmise



Meir (far left) and Ayana (far right) with Meir's children and grandchildren.

Their paths crossed many times in the past, but only in Israel, in 2020, did Ayana and Meir merge as a couple. He made *aliyah* in 2016 and she in 2018 – she from Madrid and he from Barcelona. Forces in the universe seemed to be working to bring them together. But not so quickly. Here is how it happened. Meir had been an annual visitor to Israel for many years. His was a strongly Zionist upbringing, but his life was in Spain where he managed several companies. On a visit to Israel in 1980 he met his first wife. They traveled to Argentina to marry and then settled in Barcelona. Sadly, she passed away in 2001 at age 45, leaving Meir and three young children. In the years following his wife's death, Meir developed an interest in Kabbalah. "My wife had been a very spiritual person," explains Meir. "We were interested in the spirituality of different cultures – Buddhism, Indian, and others. At a certain point I realized that I wanted to explore my own religious roots." On a visit to Israel he sought and found a

rabbi who was well versed in Kabbalah and arranged for weekly lessons over the phone, between Jerusalem and Barcelona. Ultimately, Meir invited the rabbi to visit Barcelona and give lessons to a group of interested people there. The lessons grew in popularity, and very soon a second group was formed in Madrid. Little did Meir know that his (second) wife-to-be would one day emerge from this Madrid-based group.

Rubbing Shoulders

Ayana, who was already on a path to Orthodoxy, organized the Madrid faction of the Kabbalah sessions, which soon transformed her life. "For me, the change was radical. I decided to live a committed Orthodox life. Today, I cannot imagine living my life in any other way," says Ayana. Meir's religious commitment also was strengthened, though for him the change was more gradual and less marked. There was contact between the Barcelona and the Madrid Kabbalah groups and some joint meetings, but neither knew that they

were rubbing shoulders with their future spouses at these gatherings. Meir even remembers having been in Ayana's home in Madrid. The two had emailed one another about practical matters relating to the Kabbalah study sessions, but with no hint of the romance that was to be. The meeting that would change their lives was still to come. Over the years both Meir and Ayana would visit Israel. They each maintained contact with the rabbi who had guided their spiritual conversion. After he passed away in 2009, each of them separately visited his widow. But, as in a good romantic comedy, their visits never coincided. Finally, in 2016 Meir made *aliyah*. Retired from a career in management, he became a life coach, working with clients around the world. Two years later Ayana also made *aliyah*. In Madrid she'd worked in advertising and as a teacher in a Jewish school. In Jerusalem she studied social work at Hebrew University and eventually worked in the publishing industry.

The Meeting

One day in 2020 a LinkedIn invitation landed in Ayana's inbox. She took a look at the sender's photo and said to herself: "Wow, he's so good looking." The two met soon after, on Tu B'Shvat, just as the coronavirus plague was rearing its ugly head in Israel and worldwide. By Yom HaAtzmaut they were engaged and in August (on Tu B'Av) Ayana (aged 45) and Meir (69) married in Jerusalem. Their wedding was small as dictated by Covid regulations. Two of Meir's three children and Ayana's son Noam, from a previous marriage were among the few guests at their very happy Jerusalem wedding. Living in the Lagoon building apartment that Meir had purchased years earlier, the two have made a delightful addition to our SNAC family. ●

■ profile ■

Meet the Osters

By Reva Garmise

“We are the lucky ones. Our parents on both sides were born in the UK, so no direct Holocaust connection impacted on us. We grew up in good areas of Manchester and raised our children in Cheadle. We’ve had interesting lives,” say Elaine and Bernard Oster.

Cheadle

Both Elaine and Bernard were born and raised in traditional Jewish homes in North Manchester. They both attended the King David Primary School at more or less the same time, but did not actually meet until many years later, at a fund-raising dance following the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Two years later they married and settled in Cheadle, South Manchester where their three children were born. “It was a wonderful place to bring up children,” says Bernard, “a Jewish primary school, middle-of-the-road Orthodox synagogue, and a very special community, some of whom are now in Netanya.” Their son Ben is still there. An accountant, like his father, he has his own company and in addition oversees Bernard’s accounting firm. Elaine studied at a teachers’ college. “I just sort of drifted into it and actually never was interested in the teaching profession.” Instead, after graduation, she joined the civil service, working in the Department of Work and Pensions for many years. Two years ago Elaine and Bernard downsized to a flat in London where their two daughters, Melanie, a solicitor, and Debbie, who works in conference management, were major drawing cards. Through the years, both of them have been involved in their synagogues and in other Jewish organizations, with Bernard serving as their shul’s gabbai, vice president and president, and chair of Governors of the local Jewish primary school. Elaine was active in the Ladies Guild and as chair of Manchester’s WIZO Darom chapter.

Israel

Elaine’s interest in Israel was sparked when she was 12 years old and read Leon Uris’ “Exodus.” “During my teen years I read every book about Jewish history I could get my hands on.” Her first visit to Israel was with her family in 1967, a few months before the Six Day War, while she was still in school. She returned



Bernard and Elaine in Antarctica - on a cool cruise

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■ profile ■



at age 18, with her Habonim group for a “Summer in Kibbutz” program, spending 10 glorious weeks on Kibbutz Kfar Hanassi. The third visit to Israel was with Bernard, during their second year of marriage. In 2005 they purchased their flat in Netanya, from the builder’s plan, among the very first Mancunians to pave the way for many others who followed. They may not have been in Israel in two and a half years, but the Osters are still very much part of the SNAC scene. Officially, as the UK Friends of SNAC person, Bernard is the conduit for synagogue fees and contributions from the 60-odd SNAC families who reside in the UK. On the social side, Elaine and Bernard have ties with many of the local SNAC members, some of whom they have known since long before SNAC was established.

From Antarctica to the Arctic Circle

Since Elaine’s 60th birthday, when they went on their first cruise, traveling the world has been a major part of the Osters’ lifestyle. They experienced the cold of Antarctica, cavorting with seals and penguins,

Vietnam and other exotic Asian countries, Eastern Europe, the USA, and almost annual cruises wherever the seas took them. Bernard has been chasing the Northern Lights for years, from Finland to Iceland and other northern destinations. “The Aurora Borealis, that awe-inspiring spectacle of the Northern Lights, is magical. I have traveled far and wide to get a view of this amazing phenomenon.” He waxes lyrical when he recalls the trip to Iceland in December 2017 with Tom Weisz, Tony Cole and Robert Casselson. Says Elaine, “Our travels have led us to very many destinations I never expected to see. Places like Vietnam, Japan and China were in the news when I was young for all the wrong reasons. My late father was wounded by the Japanese when he fought them in Burma during WWII. I remember being in Tokyo and wondering what my father would think if he could see me there.” In 2016 within a short period of time, they cruised to South America and Antarctica sailing among the ice floes in the stunning and majestic scenery and several weeks later, visited Tromso, Norway in the scenic Arctic Circle where they came

across a memorial to 17 Jews deported from this remote dark corner of Europe to Auschwitz. On a trip to Rome, the menorah on the Arch of Titus particularly resonated with Elaine because of its links to Jewish history. Retirement has given Bernard more time for his interests and passions. “I especially love the music and subtle lyrics of Leonard Cohen and Meat Loaf played at a high volume, I have a passion for good malt whiskey which I collect and drink and work regularly with Food Bank Aid in North London.” Elaine took advantage of the Covid lockdown to organize the family’s thousands of photos into albums. They both enjoy books on biblical and Jewish history and are involved with Jewish life as well as with the cultural life on offer in England (latent as it is at present). “Thanks to my connection to SNAC and the influence of Tom Weisz, I have come to appreciate the study of Talmud. Likewise, my study of Tanach has moved to much wider areas. I enjoy learning and reading and delving into the texts to the best of my ability, propelling me on to a more enlightened spiritual journey,” Bernard continues. Both he and Elaine look forward to the time when they can again spend time in Netanya with the SNAC community. ●

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■ roots ■

The Girl from Isfahan

By Frida Bernfeld

I am Frida Bernfeld née Mahaban (“kind” in Persian). I was born in 1961 in the city of Isfahan in Iran, which at the time was called Persia. I was the seventh and last of the children of Hanum-Hanna, and Yosef - Rahamat-Ola. My father served in the Iranian army and later became a tailor who made clothes to order, selling to both Jews and non-Jews. My mother stayed home to raise her big family. Jews have lived in Persia since biblical times. It was the Persian kings Cyrus and Darius who allowed Ezra and Nechemia to return to Israel and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Today, only about 8,000 Jews remain in Iran. Our house was in the Jewish neighborhood called Mahala (ghetto). On Friday night we would go to a synagogue that belonged to my father’s uncle Nissan, who was the synagogue rabbi (*mula*). Life revolved around his synagogue. We conducted our religious life freely in Isfahan, – kashrut, prayers, holidays, religious ceremonies and all that Orthodox life entails. There was no Jew in our city who, God forbid, smoked on Shabbat, and there was almost no assimilation. If a girl married a gentile, the family would sit shiva and mourn her as though dead. Our neighborhood had no roads or sidewalks. We had to walk through mud or snow in winter, and without access to umbrellas or warm clothing we all suffered terribly from the cold. With no doctors in the city, medical treatment was not available. We walked everywhere on unpaved ground and our shoes were quickly ruined. New shoes



The growing Bernfeld family

were purchased only once a year. The whole family slept in one room, with no electricity or running water. Our breakfast consisted of a slice of bread with tea. And when we cooked in the evening, we would take a pot and put it in a hole in the ground and cover it with horse feces to keep it warm until morning.

Freedom of Religion?

At that time Iran/Persia was under the rule of the Shah. Although the Shah allegedly gave freedom of religion to everyone, Jews suffered from open anti-Semitism. Shiite Muslim was the religion of the state, and as a result, Jews suffered humiliation and beatings. For example, at the grocery store the clerks handed the Jews their food wrapped in paper so that Muslim hands would not touch a Jew. Jews were required to salute the shopkeepers as they walked down the street and treat them with respect. When my brother Nemat went to school, after walking long distances in the cold and snow, the Muslims would throw stones at him and his Jewish friends, harass them, shout insults, and even beat them. When they were late for school the Muslim teachers would hit them with a ruler. My brother relates that his gentile teachers would slap him on the cheek for no reason. I should note however, that some Muslims had good relations with their Jewish neighbors.

My brother Nemat studied at the Edet Alliance; they studied Torah and core subjects and acquired a profession. The school was owned by the Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) and by wealthy French Jews. Children who did not have food were given free meals.

“The Haj”

My grandfather had gone to Israel years earlier during Turkish rule, traveling partly by donkey and partly by car. We called the journey to Jerusalem “The Haj,” which is what the Muslim annual pilgrimage to Mecca is called. Jerusalem was an eternal dream for the Jews in the Iranian diaspora, so every effort was made to reach it. When I was about two years old my second oldest brother decided to immigrate to Israel with Aliyat Hanoar.



The synagogue in Isfahan

■ roots ■

He settled in Caesarea. My mother missed him terribly. The Jews of Iran were ardent Zionists, and the Jewish Agency was very active in Iran. In 1963, following an economic crisis, the family decided to immigrate to Israel. They organized days and nights for our move. We traveled by bus from Isfahan to Tehran where, as emigrants, we slept and ate in a local school, or as it was called, “Bahashdiya” (Paradise). Jews arrived here from all parts of Iran on their way to Israel. The transit station was an improvised camp for immigrants with a big hall and only flimsy partitions separating the many families. We stayed in this camp about a year. My oldest brother was of conscription age and my father and uncle had to bribe the right people to keep him out of army service and allow us to emigrate.

Aliyah

Finally, in April of 1964, we received permission and boarded our airplane to Israel! The plane was filled to capacity with new immigrants. In Iran the State of Israel was called Palestine and as immigrants we were called Palestinians. As soon as we arrived in Israel, my brother was drafted into the Golani unit of the army. When he came home on



Frida's father, aged 19, in the Iranian army in 1933

leave, he would have to work in a mango orchard to help support our family.

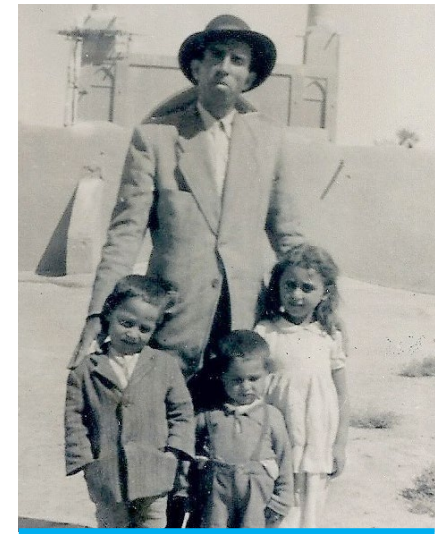
I was two and a half years old when we arrived in Israel, so suffered no *aliyah*-related trauma or discrimination, especially as I was a light-skinned, green-eyed blonde.

In Israel we were sent to a neighborhood in Netanya known as Diur La-Oleh (housing for immigrants), today known as Kiryat Nordau. We slept in huts on bare metal beds with straw mattresses. The socio-economic level in the neighborhood was to a great extent below-average. Barely knowing Hebrew, at first it was difficult to adapt to our new country. My older brothers did feel discrimination in high school and my sister was sent to the vocational class, not the academic stream like the Ashkenazim. I was among the few who continued to a university education, earning a Master’s degree, and was trained to be a pedagogic diagnostician. Because my brothers were Sephardim from a Muslim country, the Histadrut gave them only manual jobs and hard labor, including working with chemicals that gave them sores on their hands and feet. They were laughed at by the Ashkenazim and told that because we came from Persia we must be “stingy.” The Israelis called us unflattering names.

No Bridegroom

When my family believed I was at the upper end of the marrying age (28½ years old), a problem arose as there was no bridegroom. My sister suggested that I visit the grave of Yonatan Ben Uziel* in Amuka, near Safed which, according to tradition, would assure my marriage within a year. And sure enough, that is exactly what happened. (I strongly recommend this to all unmarried men and women.) My sister accompanied me to Amuka and on the way we met Avi, my husband-to-be. Avi was on his way to Safed together with his parents (who were neighbors of my sister). On the way we chatted, and the rest is history.

Avi’s parents (z”l) made *aliyah* from Romania when they were young. Avi



Frida's father with her two older brothers and cousin in Isfahan

has one sister who has two sons. My husband studied at the Technion and after graduating, we traveled with our two young daughters, Racheli and Noy, to Dallas, Texas courtesy of his employer, Amdocs. Avi worked in programming for Amdocs and I worked as a teacher in a Jewish school. Our son Noam was born in Dallas and we had the rare experience of spending a number of years with the warm Jewish community of that city. We came to the US as traditional Jews and returned to Israel as Orthodox Jews. This was thanks to the warm community there and to Rabbi Aryeh Rodan who guided and helped us.

When we returned to Israel, we lived in North Netanya for 19 years. Later, we looked for a house that would be suitable for our grandchildren and God led us to SNAC, even though we had been looking for a house in the north of the city. It seems that the good Lord wanted us to be part of the blessed SNAC community.

*Yonatan Ben Uziel was one of the 80 *tannaim* who studied under Hillel the Elder during the time of Roman-ruled Judea. A book of Kabbalah has been attributed to him and he is mentioned several times in the Talmud. ●

POSTCARDS

By Molly Zanzwiger

I.
Candle flames sway
on red checkered cloth
Azure waves begin to lick
soft white sand
Silence has laid its head down on the Carmel
Like embroidered satin covers
Gnarled hands of robust arms accustomed to
pounding stones
Awkwardly make their way into
A fresh white shirt
A dusting of cement powder lingers on his brow
Lowly Nesher worker
No longer
Shabbat has arrived

In loving memory of
Yosele Friedman z”l

II.
In her faded flowered schlafröck,
She shuffles heavy varicose legs across
the cracked brown Ottoman tile
Her thick fingers search for a few piasters in a chipped tea cup
She closes the door
And lumbers down the early sunlit street
Her company,
The shrieks and laughter of payot, kippoted monkeys on bars
Finally, she arrives at the stand,
Eyes fresh crispy rolls, and fingers out just enough coins for one
Gently, she places the bun into her crocheted sack
And trudges back,
Head bent, a pack animal,
She bears the burden of bitter memories that refuse to leave her
She returns and places the fresh roll on a cracked plate
Pulls out the makeshift stool
Her wrinkled, mole-covered hand motions to me
“Ess, ess, a frische zemale”
She stares into my hazel eyes,
And with a slight shudder
Suddenly she reveals a smile,
This one, at least this one, I have saved.

In loving memory of
Leike Beizer z”l



III.
Amidst the thunder of voices
There is a line of tight white dresses, white kerchiefs,
They stand on tiptoe atop rickety chairs
Ears bent in urgency over a separation
And suddenly There is a shout “Amen!” “Amen!”
The white stone-stuffed Wall
Sighs in unison
This is my beloved, Israel! ●

Now is the time

By Judy Isenberg

Now is the time to stop pretending
To say what is true.
Now is the time to start defending
The real you.

Now is the time to start embracing
The essence of your soul.
Now is the time to start replacing
That worn out goal.

Now is the time to stop conforming
To other people’s rules.
Now is the time to start transforming
With your own set of tools.

Now is the time to study your reflection
To stand and stare.
Now is the time to change direction
If you dare. ●



Gertie and Morris Forman, with granddaughter

One Family’s Journeys

By Gertie Forman

I have always felt that South Africa was not our permanent home. I wasn’t sure where I wanted to live. But it definitely was not South Africa. Crime was rampant and I knew in my heart that there was no future there for my children. Apartheid was something we lived with, but as Jews we did not feel comfortable following draconian laws that were biased against our black citizens. We had to decide whether to stay or leave. Do we educate our children in South Africa or overseas? Do we leave our beautiful homeland and start afresh? These were particularly difficult decisions, as our parents were getting on in years, and we could not leave without them. We decided to travel overseas every two years during our December – January vacations hoping to find a suitable new home for our family. The decision to leave was taken out of our hands when in 1983 we had a home invasion and subsequently I was traumatized for a year. Fast forward 15 years to 1998 when our son Paul and his family left South Africa, also convinced there was no future there for their children. As doctors, he and his wife were able to secure jobs in the hinterland of Canada, first in Saskatoon where they were the only Jews, and after a few years in Edmonton, where they joined a Chabad community. They missed us and asked Morris

and me to join them. By now our daughter Belinda and her husband Darryl had relocated to Sydney, Australia. Our son Ryan, married to Tanya, with two young children, had made a life for themselves in South Africa. Our daughter Laurey was planning to visit Israel for a month. We decided to visit Edmonton and try it on for size. It was the middle of winter, freezing cold and snowing. Despite this, we had an amazing

holiday and eventually decided to immigrate to Edmonton. We invited my mother who lived with us to join us. It was a miracle that she made it to Edmonton, as she was elderly and not entirely well. She lived with us for 15 months before passing away from a stroke. By this time, Laurey had made the decision to leave South Africa, choosing to spend a year in a girls’ yeshiva in Yerushalaim. A month after my mother passed away, we moved to Toronto in order to make a home for Laurey. She was floating around in Israel where the intifada was raging. Soon after, she joined us in Toronto. Our son Paul and his family joined us a year later, and our other son Ryan and his family followed five years later. We were once more a family. We lived in Toronto for 10 years. Three years later Laurey and Daniel were married in Israel, after making *aliyah*. In 2013, with Paul and Ryan and their families settled in Toronto, Morris and I decided to make *aliyah*. We lived in Modiin for a year and then made the final decision to move to Netanya by the sea. We joined SNAC, and now are living the life we always dreamed of. Our family journeys have been fraught with decisions. We have tried to apply good judgment and while we are not always sure about our decisions, we know for sure that our lifelong journeys and decision-making have led us to this wonderful place called Netanya and the amazing SNAC community. ●

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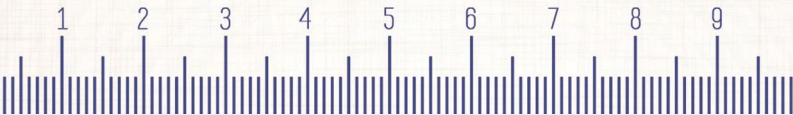
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The Last Word

By Mike Garmise

Having It Both Ways

We all know what synonyms, antonyms and even homonyms are. But what do we call a word that contradicts itself, that has two opposite meanings? That word is called a contronym, or an autoantonym. As we will see, some of them have rational explanations for their contrariness, others less so. Here we go.

Sanction is good word to start with. If a court imposes *sanctions*, the word is probably negative (because of “imposes”). But what if the sentence reads, “The court *sanctioned* the action.” Good or bad? Depends. *Sanction* has a divine heritage. *Sanct* means holy, as in sanctuary, sanctify, saint (from the French), san/to (from the Spanish), so it should be something good. If the court sanctions something, it should be “holy,” acceptable. But then, a secondary meaning came into use: sanction as an action taken to motivate a state or person that had broken the law, to obey it. And negative sanction was born.

How about *cleave*? We know what a butcher’s cleaver does. And don’t forget cleavage. But in Bereshit we read that “Therefore a man shall leave his mother and his father and *cleave* to his wife.” The Hebrew *davak* meaning to adhere, stick to, was often translated as cleave. Here the back story is different. Two different words in Old English with similar spellings eventually lost their orthographic differences and became one word.

A similar case is clip. Take this sentence: Would you clip those articles we clipped from the newspaper? Here, the chop-chop

comes from Scandinavian (klippa) while the attachment comes from the Old English (clyppan), which means to hold, embrace, prize, honor and cherish. So, if you clip a bird’s wings, are you grounding it or attaching wings so that it can try to fly?

Then we have the linguistically logical contronym. Take overlook. If I stand on a high place, I look over (and see) everything but if I look over something without seeing it, I have also overlooked. Same with oversight. What about fast? I wore my color-fast clothes as I fasted on Yom Kippur, which went fast. Here the story is a bit obscure. Fast, meaning strong, sturdy seems to have come first. If a person can hold himself fast, control himself, he may be able to refrain from eating (not very convincing, I know). Interestingly, the speedy fast may also have developed from the same meaning. In related languages, a fast runner is a hard runner. Colors that don’t run (another word to think about) hold fast to the cloth. Living a fast life is living a hard (albeit enjoyable) life.

And finally we have all those words that are positive or negative. To dust removes the stuff but we can also dust a cake with powdered sugar. Or seed – is that to take out the seeds or put them in? Or screen – to hide something or to show something? And how about peer? An equal, except for those, who in George Orwell’s delightful description “are more equal than others.”

That’s the beauty of the language. We can want to say one thing and actually say its opposite. Need I continue, or should I request a continuance? •

Say it in Hebrew!

Decisions, et al.

Decision
[hach-la-ta] החלטה

To decide
[le-hach-lit] להחליט

To change
[le-sha-not] לשנות

To change your mind
לשנות את דעתך
[le-sha-not et da-a-tech]

Important
[cha-shuv] חשוב

Lucky
[bar ma-zal] בר מזל

Unlucky
[cha-ser ma-zal] חסר מזל

Significant
[mash-ma-ut-i] משמעותי

Insignificant
[lo mash-ma-u-ti] לא משמעותי

Change
[shi-noi] שינוי

To move house
[la-a-vor di-ra] לעבור דירה

To make aliyah
[la-a-lot la-a-retz] לעלות לארץ

To change job
להחליף מקום עבודה
[le-hach-lif ma-kom a-vo-da]

To get married
[li-hit-cha-tane] להתחתן

To have children
להביא ילדים לעולם
[le-ha-vee yi-la-dim la-o-lam]

~ Barbara Westbrook ~

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