



YOUNG ISRAEL OF WOODMERE

PRESENTS



ON-LINE ISRAEL NEWS

Joel Bryk, Editor in Chief
Eli Dworetsky, Managing Editor
Glenn Schoenfeld, Editor
Gene Berkovich, Editor
Estie Bryk, Technical Advisor

Issue 2 - Iyar 5777



It Takes a Village - Sadnat Shiluv

by Joel Bryk

In December 2008, after constant rocket fire from Hamas terrorists in the Gaza Strip, the IDF launched Operation Cast Lead. The operation began with airstrikes, followed by ground forces entering Gaza. Second Lt. Aharon Karov was among many soldiers called up to defend the state of Israel. However, less than 24 hours prior he had been at his wedding, with family, friends, and his bride, Tzila. Aharon and the soldiers under his command, entered the Northern Strip on Motzei Shabbat, January 3rd with a young paratrooper from the town of Woodmere, named Yonah Bryk. Just over a week later, following detailed intelligence information about terrorist homes and structures, Aharon and 3 other paratroopers were climbing to the second floor of a home, when a powerful explosive was detonated in the house. Aharon was critically wounded; over 300 metal fragments penetrated his head and upper body. The only one of the four combatants who exited the home uninjured, was my son, Yoni.

On a Tuesday morning, sitting in my office, scanning the internet for info about the Gaza war, I came across an article about a paratroop officer who was recently married, and subsequently injured in combat. Being a worried father, and aware that my son had missed his commander's wedding, since the war had been imminent; I called the only number I had for clarification. Tzvika Levy, the head of the Lone Soldiers of the IDF, had given me his cell number at the "Tekes Kumtah" (beret/graduation ceremony) the past Succot. Tzvika took my number, and promised me that he would call me back with information, within an hour. True to his word, he said that my suspicions were correct, it was Yoni's commanding officer, and that, my son was fine, and still active. I immediately called my wife Estie, and ran through the whole story, or at least, what little I knew at the time. Within 36 hours, Estie was on a flight to Israel, she couldn't stay in Woodmere, when her 20 year old soldier, might need her nearby. She arrived on a Thursday night, to our apartment in Jerusalem, not knowing who to call or what to do, but at least she was 6000 miles closer. On the answering machine was a message, "Hi, my name is Vivienne Glaser, my son Ashi serves with Yonah, I don't know when you may get this call, but everything is fine, please call me".

Estie reached out and immediately called the number provided. Vivienne, a Brit, who had made Aliyah at the age of 14, told Estie that some Quartermaster soldiers, who were returning to Gaza that night, would be stopping by her home to pick up packages for the troops. Estie should drive to Alon Shvut to see them. When she heard that there was no car available, Vivienne told her, "Stay where you are, I am sending a driver to come and get you". When Estie arrived at

Vivienne's home, the first thing that she said, upon seeing my troubled wife was, "Come here, I think you need a big hug, more than anything else". The supply soldiers knew Yoni and Ashi, and had seen them both since the incident, and immediately Estie was reassured that everything was going to be alright. On Sunday night, my wife, along with hundreds of other mothers, waited on the Gaza border for the release of their combat weary sons. The one from Woodmere, was very surprised.

So that's how we were introduced to an amazing woman, named Vivienne Glaser.



For the past 8 years, Vivienne has been the inspiration and founder of "Swim4Sadna", a fundraising event of Sadnat Shiluv. Several years ago, Vivienne was 49, a lifelong swimmer, at the pool in Alon Shvut, thinking that she had to do something significant for her impending 50th. When she had arrived in Israel, she had been told that every year there was a National swim across the Kinneret, but it was held on Shabbat. Being Dati, there was no way that she could participate. Israel, Shabbat, National swim, it just didn't seem right. Determined to swim the Kinneret with a group of her own, she asked her friends if anyone was interested in joining her. So many said yes, that she had to make it happen. Vivienne tracked down the security officer for the National swim, who refused to take her calls. After pestering him for 2 months, Aviram finally agreed to meet. Well, all she needed to do was get a long list of



approvals, from various State agencies and they could proceed. The task seemed insurmountable to him. Two weeks later Vivienne was in his office, with all the required signatures.

Her dream would be a reality. A few months later, prior to her 50th birthday, 85 women entered the waters of the Kinneret for the first Swim4Sadna. Only women participate, for reasons of Tzniut, and because Vivienne wanted this to be a communal event, not a competition. The women show up to the area on Thursday, for a dinner and an inspirational night of bonding and camaraderie, followed by a Friday morning swim of either 1.9 kilometers, or 3.9 kilometers. They all finish at Yarden Kinneret Beach. Every year, the swimathon raises at least 2000 shekels per swimmer to benefit Sadnat Shiluv. Last year, 2016, over 300 swimmers participated, and this year, on the Friday after Yom Yerushalayim, Vivienne hopes to have almost 400 swimmers.



Sadnat Shiluv is an organization that is in close proximity to Vivienne's home and heart. Located in Gevaot, a small communal village, 5 miles from Alon Shvut, it is home to 45 families, all living in expanded trailers. Originally an outpost of a Nachal unit of the IDF, the plan was to expand to as many as 7000 units, but it has faced many challenges to the ownership of the land, on which it resides. Currently the town has 18 young men who reside in the community, in 3 of the trailer homes, and additional homes for women in Migdal Oz, that participate and work in the village, although they are all considered "adults with special needs". Elchi Glaser, Vivienne's youngest son is one of these young men.

When he was about to enter first grade, the Glaser's were living in Ma'alot, a town in Northern Israel, and looking for an appropriate school for Elchanan. Vivienne had heard about plans for an inclusive school in the Gush, and her entire family decided that they must move. A few years prior, Noa Mandelbaum, a kindergarten teacher in Bat Ayin, had included a developmentally disabled child in her Gan, to great success. She decided that this process could continue into first grade. As they expanded, accepting primarily mainstream children, with a small percentage of those with special needs, the school moved from Bat Ayin to Rosh Tzurim to Alon Shvut. Reishit, a Mamlachti Dati school, now educates these children through the eighth grade with a matriculation of over 400 students including 70-90 who are developmentally challenged.



At the age of 12, the special needs children transfer to Sadnat Shiluv, based in Gevaot where they continue their upper school studies, and begin Toranut (an assignment or skilled job), to participate in the community. Gevaot is unique in

Israel, and is an inclusive village, where the residents choose to raise their families in an environment of shared responsibility for the benefit of all their neighbors. The disabled are fully active members of Gevaot, providing services, such as a bakery, coffee house, ranch, petting zoo, and kindergarten. Beside the 18 young men who live in Gevaot, other students of Sadnat Shiluv, both boys and girls are bussed in during the week, to learn and work in the village. Job opportunities evolve over time. The residents earn a salary for their work, and are evaluated on a daily and weekly basis. Many Yachad children, from America, have visited the Sadna, and their parents would love for them to remain. The program, with its school and the village, has become a one-stop shop for the developmentally disabled, from Gan thru adult life. Similar programs have recently started in Kibbutz Merav and Kibbutz Yavne. Vivienne hopes that the



model will be copied in both the US and other countries.

Each year, high school seniors from across Israel, come to the Sadna as part of a volunteer program, or post high school Sherut Leumi, the national service. They are integrated as assistants, help in classrooms, or in the employment sectors. The work options are diverse and coordinated with Bnei Akiva and the National Service Association, Aminadav. The Sherut Leumi girls are active in the kindergartens and youth groups and are a regular fixture of the community, as they reside in Gevaot.

Swim4Sadna has raised monies to expand Sadnat Shiluv. It has built 3 kitchens, used to produce food for the residents, bake sour bread loaves for sale, and cookies and cakes for the coffee shop. Last year's donations are currently being used to build a multidisciplinary art center. This year the fundraiser will expand and improve the petting zoo and animal therapy center. The current section coordinator is Chaim Machlis, son-in-law of Tuvia and Ilana Lent of the Young Israel of Woodmere.



Chaim Machlis and Vivienne Glaser

Visitors are welcome in Sadnat Shiluv, to learn about the incredible program that these visionary residents are creating. This year's Swim4Sadna may be about to begin, but Vivienne has assured me that all members of the YI of Woodmere, are welcome in 2018.

For information about Sadnat Shiluv
<http://www.sadnat-shiluv.co.il/en>

From Russia to Israel with Love by Gene Berkovich

In 1991, I was privileged for the first time in my life to take a trip to Israel. I traveled there as a part of Jewish Learning Exchange (JLE), a program that was then run by Ohr Somayach Yeshiva in the English-speaking world, intended to interest young people in Judaism and Israel. The people in my group varied between very observant to very non-observant, and simply ignorant about Judaism (like me). The kids came from virtually all large Jewish population areas in the USA, and also from Canada, UK and even the Netherlands. At the time, I had been living in the US for about two and a half years, and, despite my best efforts, still stuck out like a sore thumb in this very nice and friendly group of people (or more like an exotic animal - everyone wanted to hear about my experiences in Soviet Union, which would still exist for another few months). At JFK airport, I met a couple of guys that I knew from NYU, and was very excited (and relieved) to find out that they were coming to the same program. On the plane, I met some more boys who were coming to our program and at the time of landing at Ben Gurion, I already was in the company of two dozen or so new friends, Jewish guys from all over the US. It was very exciting - after years as the only Jew in my class in Soviet Union, to be with other Jewish boys, in the Jewish Land, with weeks of exciting stuff ahead of us!

Yet for me, the trip was special in another way. This was truly my first foreign trip - previously, the only time I had ever traveled between countries was during my immigration to the United States. But even more special, I was actually travelling as an American!!! True, I had only received my green card a year and a half prior and travelled with an embarrassing oversized reentry permit - a special document issued by INS for stateless people in lieu of a passport. Nevertheless, I was travelling with a group of American boys and spoke to them in English. Just like all of them, I was a college student and, like many, I was joining Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity in a couple of months. Like many other boys from NY, I took a pride in being a Giants fan, as they had just won the Super Bowl. We discussed the same TV shows and political events, watched the same movies and shared many similar day-to-day experiences. Like many of them, I was coming to Israel for the first time and was just as excited. And yes, I was very proud to be able to answer "United States" to the question "Where are you from?"



The bus picked us up at Ben Gurion and brought us via Highway 1 to the Ohr Somayach campus on Shimon HaTzaddik Street in the northern part of Jerusalem, not far from Giv'at Hatachmoshet (of which I knew nothing about, at the time). Many of us were still in a state of disbelief - here we were, in Israel, in Yerushalayim!

From the first moments on the yeshiva grounds, I realized that I was in a very unique situation. At that time, during the years of massive aliyah from (the soon to be, former) Soviet Union, Ohr Somayach housed many new olim. Some of them were learning, others were working, and yet others combined both. Some spoke relatively fluent (or so it seemed) Hebrew, others spoke barely or not at all - but most did not speak English. Few were at Ohr Somayach because that's where they really wanted to be, many - because, that's where they had to, for a variety of reasons. In addition to the olim from the USSR and JLE students, the yeshiva hosted a number of youths from English-speaking countries, mostly the US and UK, who were learning there for a year or two. So here I was in Israel - perfectly understanding all conversations around me - but yet to hear a word of Hebrew!

After dinner and greetings from the faculty, many of us, especially the first-time visitors, took a walk to the Kotel. When we returned, we were very ecstatic and energized, and could not sleep. We talked and talked and talked about being Jewish and being in Israel, and what it meant to each of us. I felt every bit as Jewish and every bit as American as the other guys in my group.

Parallel to us, conversations (and frequently arguments and hot debates) were being conducted in Russian. While hanging out with the Anglo crowd (which already combined the guys of my group with those who were there on a more long-term, if not permanent, basis), I could not help but overhear and pay at least some attention to the conversations in my first language. Several times, I could not help but make a comment in Russian - to the initial surprise of the Russian-speaking guys. Later that night, for the second time in less than 24 hours, I again felt like an exotic animal - this time, being questioned by Russian speaking guys about my American experience.

At that time, I had encountered Jews from all corners of the former Soviet Union - including places I never thought had Jews, which amazed and fully surprised me. True, I was amazed, but NOT surprised, to see the Jews from all corners of

the world (outside of the Soviet Union) gathering together in our Homeland. Even back in the USSR, I was aware of Jews living in South Africa and Norway, Morocco and Australia - in part thanks to the relentless anti-Zionist propaganda foolishly trying to convince us that Jews from different parts of the world had nothing in common. Already in New York, I vividly remember hearing about Operation Solomon, shortly before my trip, that brought Home thousands of our brethren from Ethiopia. I heard about it, not from the news, but from my very close Persian-Israeli friend living in Queens, who received an ecstatic call from his Moroccan-Israeli brother-in-law living in Israel telling him about this magnificent event. It still puzzles me why I wasn't surprised about Jews living in Ecuador, but for some reason shocked to hear about the Jews from Siberia on the banks of the Don River. While seeing Jews from Kiev, Odessa or Minsk (or even former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan or Georgia) was a given, I was shocked to meet a new immigrant from the city of Sverdlovsk (currently Yekaterinburg), in the Ural Mountain region. I also met Jews from cities like Astrakhan, Rostov and Stavropol, among others that I thought were devoid of Jews, and in every case, I couldn't help but ask: "There were Jews living there?" Interestingly, many years later at a minyan at a Radiological conference in Chicago, I ran into a Russian Jewish man originally from the city of Novosibirsk, and, naturally, asked him the same question. In a true Jewish manner, he replied with a question/statement: "You must be from Kiev, aren't you?" Being, indeed, originally from Kiev, I asked him how he figured it out. He replied by saying, that only people from Kiev asked this question!



As an 18-19-year old, at the time, I initially did not fully appreciate the uniqueness and, for lack of a better term, benefits of this situation and the special opportunities it presented. Later, it would dawn on me that at the moment, only Rav Eliyahu Essas and I could communicate fluently in the two major languages on campus and relate to both the Russian Olim and the Anglos, albeit in our own different ways. More importantly, it took awhile to appreciate that knowledge of Russian gave me a window into another, often very different, dimension of Israel. As a Russian American Jew, I subsequently have had many very interesting experiences in Israel and have heard many great stories, all or most very uniquely Israeli, in their own ways, yet all or most, best appreciated as a Russian-speaking Jew from outside of Israel. Though I didn't realize it at first, from the first days and even moments of my first trip to Israel, my perception and appreciation of Israel has been in no small part influenced by my Russian American background.

Whether dialogues on the streets or encounters with individuals, from hotel custodians to police officers, from taxi drivers to doctors, soldiers and shopkeepers, newspapers and internet sites, Russian language Israeli TV channel (Channel 9, formerly known as Israel Plus) and calls made to Russian-language radio programs and so on - everything has added to a very unique flavor of my Russian American Israel experience.



Speaking of Israeli Channel 9, I have watched the channel grow from a Russian-language channel (that happens to be) broadcasting in Israel into a full-fledged Israeli channel (that happens to be) broadcasting in the Russian language. Via the internet, or sometimes via cable TV, I gladly watch the recordings of some of their shows, including their daily news summaries. In fact, I frequently start my day listening to their news program recording. I always make sure to listen to the full broadcast, including the Israeli weather forecast for that day. Listening to the weather forecast, of course, makes me in some ways feel even a bit closer to Israel (after all, the weather affects everyone more or less without a bias, regardless of their political views). But much more than that, every Israel weather forecast that I hear reminds me of one cold winter day more than 30 years ago. It was Saturday morning, and I was, in a very unhappy state of mind, getting ready to go to school (yes, the schools in the USSR were six days

a week). My father was sitting by his old short wave radio in our tiny kitchen trying hard to catch a broadcast of real news, possibly from the Voice of America or Radio Liberty. Instead, he came across a rather (at first glance) irrelevant piece of information that nevertheless, tremendously lifted our spirits. The program was a weather forecast from the Voice of Israel (Radio Kol Israel). We heard about the air temperature in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa, and even though we did not even know what these places looked like, we nevertheless felt a bit of Israel's warmth in our cold winter, a tiny ray of sunshine in that dark Ukrainian morning, a glimpse of hope in the life of a family of refuseniks. My mother sent me off to school with a smile on her face, wishing for such a forecast to be, one day soon, relevant to me and all of us. Now, years later, listening to the forecast from Channel 9, or even checking Israeli weather on my iPhone, brings me to Israel, even for a fraction of a moment, and recaps the events of that day from long ago, and, more importantly, reminds me to never lose hope and faith.

Every trip to Israel, that I have ever taken, I did as an American. On my very next trip, I proudly showed off my American passport and avoided an annoying trip to the Israeli consulate (and yes, very insensitively, laughed at my two friends who came along with me, still traveling as stateless people and having to go through those hoops). But even for an American, my Russian background continues to offer unique experiences and put me in at times, distinctive, and in some cases even rather strange or awkward, even embarrassing, situations on every trip to Israel. It has been a long journey from a largely secular Russian American Jew with two earrings, to a Shomer Shabbat Five Towns Jew in a kippah sruga - which obviously gives me yet another prospective and much deeper appreciation for Israel. But it is still safe to say that my Russian American experience has uniquely influenced virtually every trip I have taken to Israel, and continues to do so until these very days. I hope to share some of those experiences in more detail, in the future.

INTERVIEW WITH YAACOV LOZOWICK

by Glenn Schoenfeld

Years ago, one of my children was assigned "[Right to Exist: A Moral Defense of Israel's Wars](#)" by Dr. Yaacov Lozowick. At the time the book was written (it was published in 2003), its author was the head of the archives at Yad V'shem.

[Right to Exist](#) remained on our bookshelf for several more years before I picked it up myself. When I read it, the book impressed me deeply. Not only was the author clearly a skilled historian, but he laid out his arguments for the moral legitimacy of Israel's wars in a clear and convincing manner.



Sometime later I stumbled across Yaacov's blog, "Ruminations" (<http://yaacovlozowick.blogspot.com/>). At the time, he was blogging regularly on a broad range of Israel-related and other topics, including Israeli history, politics, and music, the haredi community, the IDF, Religion, the Shoah, travel, warfare and the human condition, to name a few. I read and enjoyed his writing for many years thereafter.

One excellent example of his writing is a series of articles in which Yaacov conducts a survey of Jerusalem, neighborhood-by-neighborhood, and shows how impossible it would be in practice to divide Jerusalem between Israel and a Palestinian state in any coherent way. (The articles are archived and can be found at <http://yaacovlozowick.blogspot.com/p/dont-divide-jerusalem.html>).

In another piece, which I found particularly inspiring, Yaacov observed that Israeli independence was declared 8 hours before the official end of the British Mandate. The reason the declaration was made beforehand was because the Mandate technically ended on a Shabbat. In Yaacov's words: "Zionism, a movement of mostly secular Jews who had given up on the religious project of waiting for the Messiah, chose to respect the Sabbath as its first act of sovereignty." (<http://yaacovlozowick.blogspot.com/2016/07/national-sovereignty-very-first-thing.html>)

Another article that has stayed with me is Yaacov's account of his spur-of-the-moment visit to the Bnei Akivah reading room in central Jerusalem, 30 years after his last visit while serving in the army. What Yaacov finds there provides a poignant, yet beautiful, insight into the unique life of Israeli teens. (<http://yaacovlozowick.blogspot.com/2014/05/library-of-dead.html>).

In 2011 Yaacov was appointed Chief Archivist of the Israeli National Archives. Now a government official (the Archives are part of the Prime Minister's office), he was required to refrain from public political commentary. Among other things, this meant that his blogging had to be sharply curtailed, although he still writes occasionally on a variety of non-political topics.

I was delighted when Yaacov agreed to be interviewed for *I on Israel*. Yaacov spoke by phone from his home in Jerusalem.

IOI: Before discussing your professional activities, I'd like to get some personal background. I see from your Wikipedia profile that you were born in Germany.

Yaacov: That is technically correct, but misleading. I was born on a U.S. military base. My father was an officer stationed there when I was born.

IOI: I guess that accounts for your excellent command of English. What did your father do in the military?

Yaacov: He was an attorney in the JAG corps, and continued practicing as an attorney when he got out. He was a very good one.

IOI: So how did you come to live in Israel?

Yaacov: My father grew up on the West side of Chicago. My mother came from the North side. Both areas were predominantly Jewish and Polish. My parents weren't religious and really didn't think much about being Jewish. It was just part of their environment. When my father was stationed in Germany in the 1950s, that changed. For the first time in their lives, my parents were living in an area without Jews. This forced them to think more seriously about their identities. They decided that being Jewish had value and was worth preserving. Thus began a decades-long process of becoming more religious. As far as moving to Israel, my parents moved to Israel, with me and my two other siblings still living at home, in July 1967, one month after the Six-Day War. I was 10 years old.

IOI: What was your army service like?

Yaacov: I enlisted in the IDF in August 1975 and eventually became a tank commander. (In one of his 2015 blog articles, reflecting on his service 40 years later, Yaacov explained that when he entered the military, the IDF was still reeling from the effects of the Yom Kippur War. Consequently, there was a heavy emphasis on building up the tank corp. With respect to the effects of his service, he noted that "...each of us and all of us really did acquire a personal confidence based on achievement and the satisfaction of successfully coping, functioning in the system and mastering its requirements. By the time we walked out, we really were adults, citizens, contributors to society and, oh yes, lords of our destiny to the degree this is granted to mere mortals.")

IOI: What about your children?

Yaacov: I have two sons and a daughter. They all served, but that was years ago.

IOI: Before your current position, you were director of the archives at Yad Vashem.

Yaacov: Yes, I was at Yad V'shem from 1982 to 2007, with some interruptions. I served as head of the archives from 1993 to 2007. Although I am an historian, most of the work I did centered around modernizing the archives. By the time I left, it was the most technologically advanced archive in Israel.

IOI: What were some of your most important experiences while at Yad Vashem.

Yaacov: Even though I am a trained historian, most of the work I did was technology-related. I would say one of our biggest and most important achievements was bringing the database of Holocaust victims on line. The database is very user-friendly, and the number of users is very high. The chances of finding any one of the six million are greater than 2 to 1. And the database has continued to grow since I left.

IOI: You wrote "[Right to Exist](#)" while at Yad Vashem. What motivated you to write it?

Yaacov: As I mention in the introduction to the book, my thinking was undergoing a major shift at that time. I had been a supporter of the peace process for many years. In the wake of Oslo, the Palestinian rejection of Ehud Barak's peace proposals in 2000 and the breakout of the first intifada, I had to reevaluate my basic assumptions. I wanted to explain how I had come to vote for Ariel Sharon, a man I had vilified for years after Sabra and Shatilla. I initially wrote the book for myself, to help clarify my thinking. (In the last paragraph of Yaacov's introduction to the book, he writes: "So if our enemies dispute our right to exist, let's at least make certain that we can defend our actions to ourselves. This will add fiber to our resilience, fortitude to our determination, and encouragement to those allies still left with us. Ensuring that our wars are just will also ensure that those of our enemies are not, and this knowledge will strengthen our hand until the day they tire of spilling blood for what should not be achieved anyway.") (Yaacov's first book, published in 2000, and based on his doctorate, was "[Hitler's Bureaucrats: The Nazi Security Police and the Banality of Evil](#)".)

IOI: You are now Israel's Chief Archivist. When did you start? Is there a term? And what are your duties?

Yaacov: I started in August 2011. A term is 8 years, although I don't know if I will stay for my full term. For one thing, if I leave I can express my opinions freely again. As head archivist I have two official duties. I am in charge of the National Archives. I am also the nominal leader of the archival field in Israel. Traditionally, the head archivists were elderly men at the end of their careers. One notable exception was Professor Tuvia Friling, from the University of Beer Sheva, who was

appointed around 2002. He really wanted to modernize the system, but his efforts were thwarted. He left after two and a half years or so. When I interviewed in 2011, I told the search committee that I wanted to complete the work that Friling had set out to do. I also told them that if they wanted to maintain the status quo, I was not their man. So, when I was chosen, I had a real mandate to revolutionize the Archives.

IOI: What have been some of your achievements?

Yaacov: I've been lucky to work with a fine team of technologists and mostly young archivists. We have managed to overturn every single procedure and process at the Archives. It is now one of the most advanced archives in the world. The Archives contain some 400 million pages of documents. 52 million pages have already been scanned, and we're scanning more than 100,000 pages a day. Our goal is to scan the entire Archives, bring it online and make it accessible to all. There are already more than 12 million scanned and declassified pages online. If you are searching for a document and can't find it, you can request help from an archivist online; if you see the description but the file itself isn't yet online, we'll locate, scan and declassify it, and put it online. You'll be the last person ever to need to order it, because from then on, it's there.

Your readers may be interested to know that although the Archives has not had an English interface up until now, we hope this will be fixed by the end of this month, perhaps as early as May 16.

IOI: What are some of the more interesting things your work has uncovered?

Yaacov: As you may know, there is a long-standing claim in some circles that the State of Israel stole thousands of Yemenite babies in the 1950s. The controversy has been fueled primarily by a small group of second and third-generation Yemenites who are angry at the way the Yemenite community was treated when it first arrived in Israel. We gathered all the documents in the Archives on this matter and put them online within 6 months. No other archive in the world could have moved that fast.

IOI: What do the documents reveal?

Yaacov: I don't believe this is a story that can be definitively resolved through documentation. There is enough ambiguity that partisans can use the materials to advance their various positions. Personally, I think the cumulative weight of the evidence is that there was no government program. But there was a mind-boggling amount of callousness. Government workers were radically unaware and uncaring regarding who the Yemenites were. When the immigrants were sleeping outdoors, there was a big push to get them into tents. When they were all in tents, there was a big push to get them into apartments. The government was trying to build a new state under trying circumstances. They had a job to do, and they just did it. The government workers didn't have time to be empathetic.

IOI: What was the result of the archives of the Yemenite children going online?

Yaacov: For one thing, we put an end to the claim that the government was hiding evidence. Beyond that, in the end I don't think it continues to really matter to a lot of people, even Yemenites. I'll give you an example. One day I was talking with a staff member who was working on the project. Working with her was a woman named Shira, an outside consultant who had worked with us on a number of projects in the past. Suddenly it dawned on me that Shira had dark skin. I asked about her background, and sure enough she had Yemenite ancestry. When I asked her about the project it became clear that she was interested in it primarily as a technical challenge. She had limited interest in the underlying substantive issues.

IOI: Let's move to the subject of Israel generally.

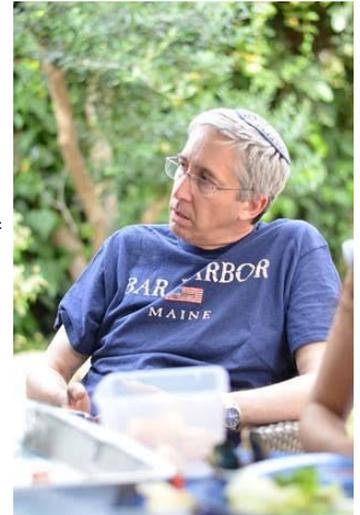
Yaacov: Well, I am a raging Zionist. I can be as cynical as anyone, but the existence of the country is a miracle. Being able to contribute to this is one of the most significant things one can do. I think it was Churchill who said something like "Americans always make the right decision, after trying all the others." The same is true with Israel. Not that Israelis always set their minds to getting things right, but when we do, sooner or later we get it right.

A personal example is the National Archives. When I was hired, they were stuck in the 19th century. In a few short years they have become one of the most technologically advanced in the world. Water is another good example. As a child growing up, we watched the Kinneret every year. If the water level was low, we knew we would soon be having water shortages. Now, we don't have to watch the level of the lake at all. We have solved our water issues with desalination, purification and conservation.

I believe that Israel is unusual at getting things done. It is exhilarating.

IOI: What about relations between Jews and Arabs?

Yaacov: They are getting better all the time. Again, an example from the Archives. The records are classified. (The Archives are part of the Prime Minister's office). Everyone who works there has a security clearance. Now Israel has



affirmative action for three groups: the disabled, Ethiopians, and Arabs. We have Arabs on the staff of the Archives. They have security clearances like everyone else and they are regularly involved in reviews and discussions of classified materials.

Another good example is what has happened in our hospitals. The doctors, the staff, the patients. It is Jews and Arabs at every level. Jews treat Arabs. Arabs treat Jews. All without a second thought.

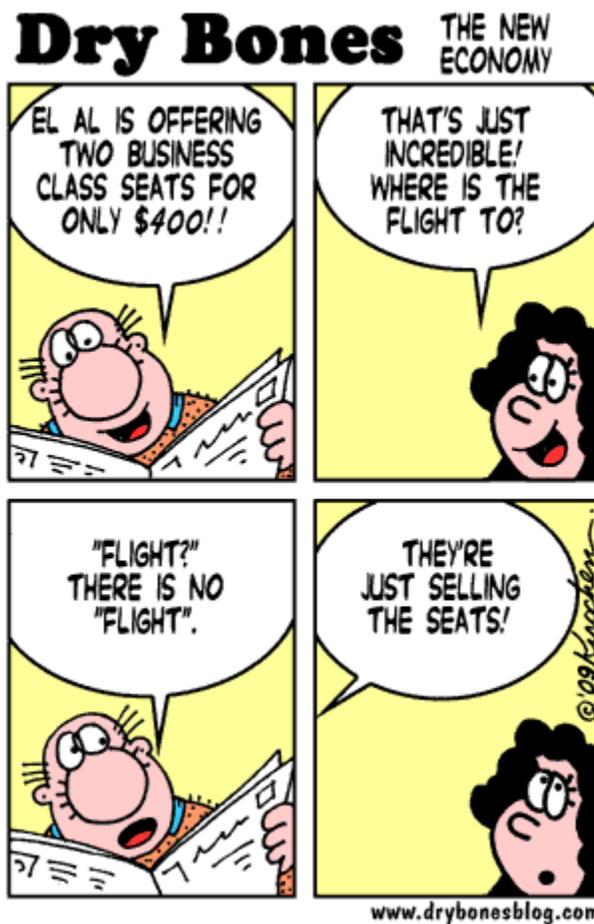
There is no Islamophobia. There is still tension. And there are still problems. But the levels of awareness, interaction and integration are getting better. In surveys, Israeli Arabs are very optimistic about the future of the country, sometimes even more optimistic than Jewish Israelis.

IOI: Any final thoughts?

Yaacov: Well, we are coming up on the 50th anniversary of the Six-Day War. Yom Yerushalayim is May 24. President Trump will be in the country then. It is an exciting time. At the Archives, we have been preparing a lot of material on the Six-Day War. As you may know, when Israel goes to war, the war effort is overseen by the Security Cabinet.

On May 18th, we will be making available online transcripts of all the previously classified minutes of the Security Cabinet from January to July 1967. Unfortunately, they are all in Hebrew. But for anyone with Hebrew skills, they are fascinating reading.

IOI: *Yaacov, thank you very much for your time. Good luck with the rest of your tenure at the Archives, and we look forward to your writing when you are unleashed once again, to express yourself freely.*



Return to Ein Gedi by Joel Bryk



As noted in Wikipedia, the name Ein Gedi is composed of two Hebrew words, "ein" which means spring, and "gedi" which means goat-kid. Ein Gedi thus means "Kid Spring", or to my understanding, an area of flowing water, beloved by your kids, or your grandkids.

This past Pesach, privileged to be in Israel to celebrate the Chag, my wife and I returned to Ein Gedi, accompanied by our Israeli grandkids, to re-experience our attachment to this area, and the wonders of the land of Israel.

The oasis of Ein Gedi is a strip of three miles along the slope of the Judean Desert, as it curves down to meet the west coast of the Dead Sea. From about 1000 feet below sea level at the lowest point, to over 300 feet at the highest plateau, it is a majestic rise in the arid landscape of southern Israel. It includes several exciting attractions, hiking paths for beginners and the more experienced, streams of flowing water, waterfalls - including the famous David's waterfall in Wadi David, the remains of a Chalcolithic Temple (Copper Era @ 6000 years ago), and an excavated ancient Synagogue. In addition, there are yearly excavations of Tel Goren, the site of the Israelite, Persian, and Hasmonean towns near Wadi Arugot. Tel Goren was later occupied by the Romans and the bathhouse of that era still remains. It is said that in this long, narrow building, that the Jewish rebel leader Bar Kochva administered his rebellion.

Being the biggest and most impressive oasis in Israel, the Ein Gedi reserve is an attraction for hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Hikers of all age groups and capabilities are found in all corners of the reserve. In fact, one of the more recent additions, are metal railings, in areas that were previously difficult to access along Wadi David, leading to the main waterfall. We passed a blind hiker, with a guide and assistance, navigating the route with little difficulty. In areas of the easiest climb the path can be narrow, but at no time will a senior or a small child be unable to complete the trail.



Ein Gedi is mentioned for the first time in the Book of Yehoshua, Joshua 15:62, among a list of the six desert cities in the domain of the tribe of Yehudah. Later, the future King David hides from King Saul in the strongholds of Ein Gedi, Samuel I 24:1-2, also described as the "Desert of Ein Gedi". While Saul and three thousand men were searching for David, "on the Rocks of the Wild Goats", David secretly severed the hem of Saul's coat. There is a reference to Ein Gedi as a fisherman's town in Yechezkel, an end of days scenario when the waters will be sweetened, and another reference to the "Vineyards of Ein Gedi", in Shir Hashirim. Other references are more obscure, such as the mention in Divre Hayamim, Chronicles 2 20:2, where King Yehoshaphat is informed that the Ammonites are gathered for battle in Chazazon-Tamar, also referred to as Ein Gedi. This reference may be from the abundance of palm trees in the area of the oasis, hence the name Tamar. There is another reference to Chazazon-Tamar, in Parshat Lech-Lecha, as an Emorite city, captured by the victorious four kings, as they conquered the five weaker kings.

Jewish Roman historian Josephus Flavius gives an account of a thriving Judean village in the first centuries BCE and CE, deriving its prosperity from the secret manufacturing of the persimmon perfume, an ancient fragrant plant known as

"Bossem" (not to be confused with the fruit known as persimmon, today). The exact equivalent of the perfume product is not known, but in the ancient world the plant grew in thick groves in Ein Gedi. The resin from the plant was highly valued, and manufactured for the First Temple Era, Judean kings. King Yoshiyahu of Judah installed the practice of anointing new kings with persimmon oil.

The settlement was destroyed during the Babylonian conquest, but re-inhabited by Jews returning from Babylon. It thrived during the Persian and Hellenistic period. During the Hasmonean period the agricultural development reached its peak. Dates from the aforementioned palm trees were a large crop, grapes in its vineyards, and tropical and medicinal plants were grown. Including the henna plant, mentioned in Shir Hashirim: "My beloved is to me, a cluster of henna blossoms, from the vineyards of Ein Gedi". For approximately 700 years the residents developed intensive farming methods, built water storage pools, aqueducts, and a fortress overlooking Wadi Arugot. There was an estate of the Hasmonean royal house, and after the Roman invasion, it was leased to King Herod, who turned it into a Roman imperial estate. Some of the residents took part in the Great Revolt, and others were fatally harmed by Zealot incursions into the settlement. According to Josephus, they were Sicarii from Masada, who stole all the crops after killing 700 women and children, before returning to their stronghold. Following the destruction of Masada, a Roman military camp was setup alongside the settlement, to restore Roman authority and to protect the supply of persimmon. These are the soldiers who built the excavated bathhouse.

During the Second Jewish War, the famed leader, Bar Kochva, used Ein Gedi as his administrative center. At the approach of the Romans, he retreated to the caves in the area. Once, while hidden, he sent a letter to the inhabitants of the town that he was not receiving an adequate amount of supplies. "From Shimon Bar Kosiba to the men of Ein Gedi...in comfort you sit, eat, and drink from the property of the House of Israel, and care nothing for your brothers". In another, he makes specific requests in order to celebrate the holiday of Sukkot. "I have sent to you two donkeys...in order that they shall pack and send to the camp, palm branches and citrons. And you, from your place, send others who will bring myrtles and willows. See that they are tithed and send them to the camp. The request is made because the army is big. Be well." These letters from the nearby caves, are currently found in the Israel Museum.

The Bar Kochva revolt led to the destruction of this Jewish settlement, and it was not rebuilt until the third century CE. Jewish settlers returned to the spot to build a smaller village, with one of the earliest synagogues in Israel. The inhabitants were wealthy, as they



credit: wikipedia

devoted considerable resources to the decoration and design of the structure. The site has been open to tourists since 1997, after the mosaic floor was accidentally discovered in 1965, when the field was plowed. The mosaic has been largely restored. It has a leaf pattern with a central medallion in the form of a diamond. In the corners, a pair of peacocks hold a bunch of grapes. Encircling the diamond are the signs of the Zodiac. Another impressive find is the dedication mosaic. The first eight lines of the 18 line text are in Hebrew, with the rest in Aramaic. The inscription mentions Biblical persons beginning with Adam, the signs of the zodiac, the months of the year, and Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Then it says Peace unto Israel, and following is a mysterious warning. "Anyone causing a controversy between a man and his friend or whoever slanders his friend before the Gentiles, or whoever steals the property of his friend, or whoever reveals the secret of the town to the Gentiles - He whose eyes range through the whole earth and who sees hidden things, He will set his face on that man and on his seed and will uproot him from under the heavens..." It has been suggested that the "secret" is the manufacturing process for Bossem, the persimmon perfume. The town suffered its destruction at the hand of the Byzantine Roman Emperor, Justinian, as part of his persecution of the Jews.

Today, Ein Gedi is a protected space of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, and is home to distinctive plants, birds, and animal species. The vegetation includes plants and trees from the tropical, desert, and Mediterranean regions, such as the Sodom apple, acacia, jujube, poplar, and tamarisk. The many species of resident birds such as the vultures and Tristram Starling, are supplemented by over 200 additional species during the migration periods in the spring and fall. The mammal species include the Nubian ibex and the rock hyrax. The reserve is home to the largest herd of ibex in the country. As for the rock hyrax, they are the easiest to find, as they have grown accustomed to eating from the debris, left



by the many visitors. The last of a family of leopards may have already departed from the Ein Gedi reserve, although there were reports in 2006 of the famous leopard, named Hariton, feasting on local house cats and dogs in Kibbutz Ein Gedi. At night other predators appear, i.e. foxes, wolves, and bats.



There are two year round streams in the nature reserve, the David stream, relatively short, and the larger Arugot stream, about 40 kilometers in length. Four small springs rise in the park, Ein David, Ein Arugot, Ein Shlomit, and Ein Gedi, all on the hillside between the two larger streams. The total output of water is around 3 million cubic meters per year, and the source of the water is the rainfall of the Judean Hills, which seeps into the groundwater and gushes up in the area of the nature reserve. No wonder the main source of income for Kibbutz Ein Gedi, since the 1990's, is the mineral water factory.

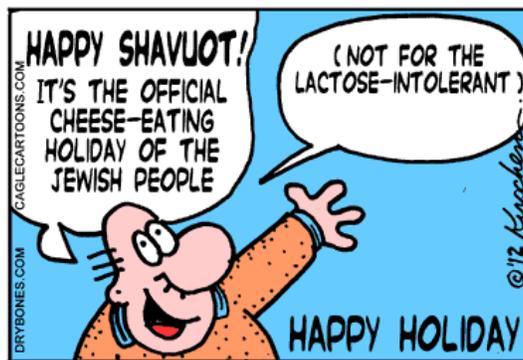
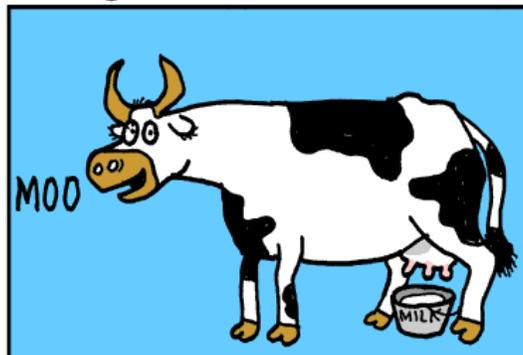
The drive to Ein Gedi from Jerusalem is approximately one hour to an hour and fifteen minutes, depending on traffic, and the entrance to the reserve is about 1 kilometer north of the Kibbutz. In the summer, the hours are 8am to 5pm with a closure one hour earlier on Fridays and Erev Chaggim. The last entry is one hour before closure. The visit can be as long as one hour to David's waterfall and back, or an entire day, if one decides to hike up the mountain to the lookout trail on top. Even the trail to Nachal Arugot can be a full day of activity, with a stop at Tel Goren, the excavated village, and the area of the ancient synagogue. The entrance fee for the day includes all of the above, but only for that same day. Prices are reduced for children, students, and groups of over thirty individuals.

You may have traveled to Ein Gedi before, but I encourage you to return. Re-experiencing the beauty of Eretz Yisrael, through the eyes of children or grandchildren is a gift from the "Ein" to our "Einayim".

For the Israel Parks Authority Website

<http://www.parks.org.il/sites/English/ParksAndReserves/enqedi/Pages/default.aspx>

Dry Bones HAPPY HOLIDAY



The Lyrics may Change, yet the Song remains the Same

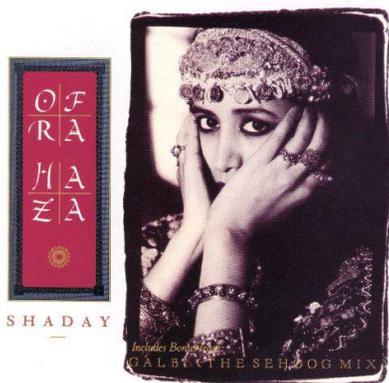
by Gene Berkovitch



I LOVE Israeli music - and this is not an understatement. Even though I never have had the privilege of receiving a formal Hebrew education, and my Hebrew language could hardly be called fluent (though, I must say, improving - I am really trying), hearing Hebrew is music to my ears (no pun intended). Literally, like the words of an old Israeli song *Ein Li Eretz Acheret -rak mila be'Ivrit choderet el orkai el nishmati* - just a word in Hebrew pierces my veins and my soul. And I truly love it all - be it modern work of Sarit Hadad or Eyal Golan, the never-aging and always great Zvika Pik, or, especially, the older melodies sung by the likes of Yehoram Gaon or Yaffa Yarkoni.

If my memory serves me right, the only time behind the Iron Curtain that I heard an Israeli performer was in late 1987, on a record of, I believe, a female performer Ilana Avital, which was sent by some American or Israeli organization trying to support the Jews in the former Soviet Union, and keep them connected to the Jewish culture, as difficult as the task may have been. I can hardly call this an exposure to Israeli music - I figured that album was Hebrew and not Yiddish by a method of exclusion, due to the presence of Jewish characters on the cover, which my grandmother, a"h, could read, but not understand the words - thus leading me to believe that the disc was NOT in Yiddish.

My first true exposure to Israeli music came about a year later, when my family, finally, was able to leave the Soviet Union. In transit to the United States, my family spent several months in Italy. Our apartment in a small town of Ladispoli, about 20 miles north and west of Rome, came with a small black and white TV which, nevertheless, offered us nearly 100 different channels (as opposed to 3 state channels on TV, about 80% redundant, that I grew up with in my old country)! One channel showed top European and American music videos 24/7 - wow, what a treat for a 16-year-old boy!



Among other videos, I came across two clips by a female musician I knew nothing about at the time, though very soon learned to love. Even with my limited (if not nonexistent) Italian, in combination with the French that I studied in middle school, I learned about this singer, a daughter of Jews from Yemen. The singer was, of course, the legendary Ofra Haza, a"h, a true legend of Israeli music. Then, I saw the videos of Ofra Haza's hits *Galbi* and *Shaday*. Never mind that both clips were primarily in English, and partially in Arabic (which I mistook for Hebrew, due to lack of familiarity with either language at the time) - the mere fact of hearing an Israeli musician, and on an international stage nonetheless - felt truly incredible! I was very happy to buy the album on tape a couple of years later - sure brought back those memories.

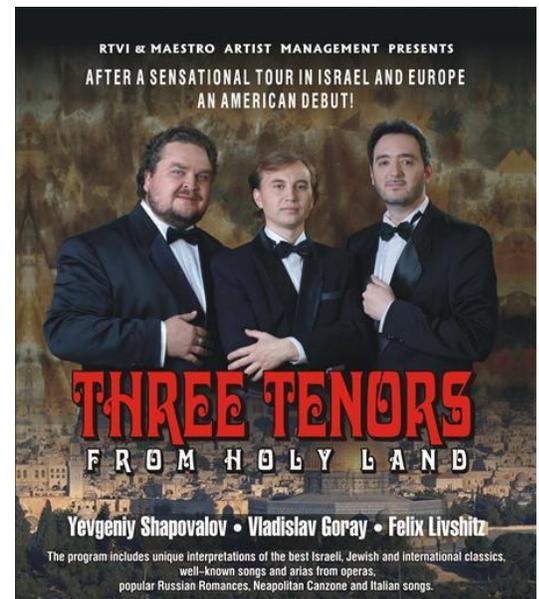
My real introduction to Israeli music took place a couple of years later - not surprisingly, on my first trip to Israel, in 1991 (for younger readers - in the days before the internet and YouTube, when not everyone even had a CD player). I was attending the Jewish Learning Exchange program at the Ohr Somayach Yeshiva in Jerusalem. The guys in my program were divided into smaller groups of not more than 5-6 people. My group leader was Rabbi Gavriel Rubin, a young energetic teacher, who, at the end of our first group meeting, presented me with a tape. The caption on the cassette stated "A gift to a new immigrant from Duo Re'im" and it was issued by the Israeli Ministry of the Immigrant Absorption. The tape contained many Israeli classics sung by Duo Reim, with some added commentaries and explanations in Russian, in between the songs. The tape started, not unexpectedly, with *Heveinu Shalom Aleichem* and *Oseh Shalom*, two songs with which I was already familiar. The remainder of the collection on the tape truly opened my eyes (or, more likely ears) into the world of Israeli music, with which I truly fell in love. I heard a beautiful



rendition of Adon Olam, a Sephardic classic La'Ner Veli'vsamim, a Zionist classic Kachol ve'Lavan, and many others. This was also my first exposure to Naomi Shemer's music - via her wonderful Al Kol Eleh and Yerushalayim Shel Zahav. I especially fell in love with the latter - particularly after hearing the story of the song on this tape, being first performed a few weeks prior to liberation of the Holy City, and as I was observing the sunset over Yerushalayim from the Haas Promenade, only a few days prior. As a side note, eight years later, at my wedding, my parents walked me down the aisle to the tune of Yerushalayim Shel Zahav. And to this day, my commute to work every day (except the Three Weeks in the summer) begins with listening to Yerushalayim Shel Zahav.

When my parents made their first trip to Israel in 1993, I, naturally, asked them to bring me a tape with Israeli songs, which they gladly did. The tape contained 90 minutes of Israeli music - Jewish and Israeli songs from the days of (and probably before) the War of Independence and probably extending into the late 60's - early 70's. I was NOT familiar with all but two or three songs on the tape - Hatikvah (which started the tape), Hava Nagilah and the fuller version of Yerushalayim shel Zahav (the Duo Reim tape only contained the first stanza and the refrain, while the current tape still missed the fourth stanza, which was written after the liberation). Yet, while I was not familiar with the vast majority of the songs, to my surprise, I was VERY familiar with some of the melodies. Though I could not believe it at first, those were the melodies of the days of my grandparents, the Russian and Soviet songs which were always played on radio and TV in the days of my childhood. My original disbelief has gradually dissipated upon hearing song after song, and, over the years, with the advent of the Internet, discovering even more such songs - believed by Israelis to be true Israeli classics, yet being sung to the tunes written by Russian and Soviet (frequently Jewish) composers and spanning all genres of music - from classic Old Russian melodies to children's songs. From military marches and war songs to communist propaganda songs and even criminal songs, known to every Russian, big or small - these melodies have been integrated into Israeli musical culture, and prompted me to write about this subject.

It is impossible to fully write about and appreciate the Russian influence in Israeli music in one article, or even a series of articles - that would probably require at least a chapter in a book, if not an entire book. Nor is it possible to fully analyze exactly how these melodies came to Israel and became Israeli, and why some became very popular, while others - less so. Most of these songs predate the Grand Aliyah of the 1990's. However, Russian (and Soviet) Jews have been coming to the Holy Land for at least as long as modern Zionism has been in existence. Many came to Eretz Yisrael with absolutely nothing, other than what they had learned in their old country. Naturally, they brought with them the melodies from the old home - many of which were composed by Jews. Whether the Zionists arriving in the early 1930's bringing Russian classics or revolutionary songs, or the Eastern European refugees coming to the Holy Land immediately before or after the establishment of Medinat Yisrael, bringing the melodies of the Red Army and the partisans (where many of them heroically fought against the Nazis). This phenomenon took place in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's, and continues even during our days, the late 20th-early 21st century. Over the years, several poets have been particularly prolific in translating Russian songs into Hebrew, among them Zeev Geizel, Yakov Shabtai, Avraham Shlonski and more recently Shaul Reznik. Additionally, with the thawing and growth of the Russian-Israeli relationship in the past 30 years, an almost opposite phenomenon is taking place - Israeli songs are being translated into Russian! I wanted to write about some of these songs that found a new "home" in Israel in this article.



While many, many Russian songs have been translated into Hebrew and sung at least once, I wanted to pick and choose those that are probably familiar to most Israelis, the songs that have been picked up by the Israeli musical giants like Yaffa Yarkoni or Arik Einstein, the songs that you are likely to hear on radio shows, be it *Ivri lifnei Shabbat* on Radio Lev HaMedina from Rishon Le-Zion or Meir Weingarten's *The Israel Show* on the Nachum Segal network. The songs you would frequently encounter in Israeli old song collections or YouTube lists, without looking too hard. At the end, I have included a couple of additional songs that did not necessarily meet these criteria, at least to the best of my knowledge.

Those Were the Days (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNFRAYkJOE0>)

It is under this name that this song is known in Israel and everywhere outside the Russian-speaking world - I am talking about the relatively well-known Israeli song *Ka'eleh Hayu Hayamim* (*Hayu Yamim Chaver*) (<http://hebrewsongs.com/?song=kaelehhayuhayamim>). In Russian, the song is known as *Dorogoy Dlinnoyu* (*By the long road*). In addition to the differences in the meaning of the title, the song is also different from most, if not all, other songs in that it was not created by Jews. The song was originally written in 1924 as a romance by Boris Fomin and Konstantin Podrevsky, and has since been translated to many languages. The Hebrew translation (see the link above), which was written by Miki Hartavi, significantly differs from the original Russian version, as do the versions in other languages. Nevertheless, that does not take away from the beautiful song in Hebrew, which is now believed by many Israelis to be a truly Israeli song. The song has since been performed by many great Israeli singers, including Avi Toledano and Shuli Natan (the link is provided above, beside the title).

Elokim Shmor al-Ima (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwfR5RjeOwc>)

What Russian, especially a child, does not know the original, Russian-language version of this song, known as *Solnechny Krug* (*The Solar Circle*)? Many, if not all, kids of the 1960's and later, have grown up hearing this song on TV, radio and children's concerts - all knew the lyrics, written by a famous Russian poet Lev Oshanin and put to music by a Soviet Jewish composer Arkady (Avram) Ostrovsky in 1962. The original words were actually written by a young boy Kostya Barannikov in 1928, many years later noted by Oshanin. The boy wrote a short four-liner, which said: "Let there always be sun, let there always be sky, let there always be mama, let there always be me," which was subsequently used by the authors as a refrain for the song. The Hebrew version of the song was probably written in the early 1970's by a future Canadian-Israeli physician Gideon "Gidi" Koren while he was a medical student at Tel Aviv University, and sung by the musical group that he founded, *Ha'achim veba'achayot* (*Brothers and Sisters*)-

I came across the Hebrew version of the song several years ago, and liked it even more than the original version, finding the words much more meaningful and powerful, for several (somewhat biased) reasons. For starters, the song talks about the boy writing a letter to Hashem with his wishes (in the Russian version - a boy drawing a picture of the sun in the sky and writing the words of the refrain mentioned above). The Hebrew refrain could be translated as follows: "L-rd, guard mama, L-rd, guard aba, guard, my G-d, the sun, L-rd, guard me." First, the mention of Hashem - by the way, a common element of many Israeli songs, even written by seemingly non-religious musicians - turned the song into a beautiful, very sincere, yet very emotional prayer by an innocent child - which may as well be one of our children, grandchildren, or great grandchildren. Secondly, the boy is asking Hashem about his father and mother (in the Russian version - only a mother). Finally, I revisited the song during Operation Tzuk Eitan in 2014, as our brave soldiers were fighting Hamas terrorists, sometimes in the total darkness of the tunnels. When I heard the song again in the summer of 2014, it brought me to tears - it was as if the second stanza of the song was prophetically written for that time - and it may as well have been a boy in Sderot or my nephew and niece Eddie and Shani hiding in the safe room of their Ashdod apartment during Tzeva Adom, saying this prayer for our soldiers:

**L-rd, please also guard the soldiers
Because they are alone there, in darkness,
Yes, they are already big,
But please also guard them, my G-d.**

In the latter part of the clip, the refrain is sung in a number of languages, including Arabic - though I am not sure if any of the words, if not some of them, are nearly as powerful as the Hebrew.

Katyusha (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGmModQHSSM>)



To say that I was surprised to hear this token Soviet song in Hebrew would be an understatement. I was even more shocked to hear it in the lobby of the Rimonim Galei Kinneret hotel in Tveria, a city well in the range of the Hizbullah Katyusha rockets. Yet this is, even to this day, a relatively popular Israeli song, especially its rendition by the famous kibbutz band Gevatron. The song was written in 1938 by a Soviet poet Mikhail Isakovsky to the music written by a famous Soviet Jewish composer Matvey Blanter. A Lithuanian Jewish poet Noah Pniel subsequently translated it to Hebrew in 1940, evidently prior to his

Aliyah. Interestingly, the words of the song have absolutely nothing to do with the famous missile launcher. The song tells about a young woman named Katyusha (one of short names for Katherine) walking on a steep, high cliff top and sending a song-letter to her beloved, who is protecting the border far, far away. As a side note, the nickname Katyusha was given to the missile launcher in 1941, although there is no consensus why. The most likely theories attribute the name to either the letter "K" painted on the launchers, standing for the Komintern factory that was manufacturing them, or possibly the steep, high cliff top in the town of Rudnya, where these launchers were used for the first time in 1941, similar in description to the cliff top from the famous song. The song was considered one of the token Soviet songs, and was adopted by the Marxist movements and partisans in many countries, thus translated in many languages. It is therefore no wonder that the kibbutzim in the British mandate Palestine and subsequently in Israel, also liked the song and made it a part of Israeli music culture. In particular, probably the most famous such kibbutz band, Gevatron, popularized Katyusha in Israel, along with many other Russian and Soviet songs.

Shir HaPalmach (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyaO83IEMpU>)

The story of this song, or more so a military march, that many Israelis, especially the older generation, consider truly theirs, is no less interesting. The original version of the song was written as early as 1915 as a march for one of the regiments in the Russian army during WWI. Many other alternative lyrics were adopted as marches during the Russian Civil War, by the White Army, the anarchists of Nestor Makhno as well as some partisan formations that eventually became incorporated into the Red Army. The Hebrew version of the song appeared in 1942, with the music adopted by David Zehavi to the words by Gilad Zerubavel. Though different in words, the song largely follows the themes of its many predecessors in Russian language, just changing the geographic names, and has really become (albeit unofficially) the anthem of the Palmach. Here are the first two stanzas, as translated by George Jakobovits:

**Though the storm is ever mounting
Still our heads remain unbowed.
We are ready to obey all commands,
The Palmach will win - we've vowed.**

**From Metulla to the Negev,
From the desert to the plain,
All our youth defend the homeland,
Till we bring it peace again.**

Anecdotally, I heard many years ago that esteemed Israeli General and former Chief of Staff of the IDF, the legendary Rafal Eitan, ז"ל, was a big fan of Russian military marches (though I could never find another source confirming or refuting this information) - perhaps this was one of such marches.

Blue Kerchief-Tchol Hamitpachat (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkSqv9Mzvqo>)

I was very happy to hear this waltz song in Ivrit, as this was one of my favorite songs in the old country, and here is why. First, it was one of the signature songs of World War II, or the Great Patriotic War, as it was called in the former Soviet Union, and it always reminded me of my maternal grandmother and grandfather, who volunteered to fight in the armored corps in WWII. Secondly, in one of the versions, the song talks about the bombing of my birth place, the city of Kiev, heralding the beginning of the war. Thirdly, the song was written by one of my favorite composers of all times, a Polish Jewish pianist Jerzy Petersburski, with the original Russian words written by a Soviet Jewish poet Yakov Galitsky. The Hebrew words were written by Avraham Shlonski, probably in the mid-to-late 1940's. The song became a part of the repertoire of many famous Israeli singers, including Tova Piron and Arik Einstein. In Ivrit (see the translation below), the song generally follows the theme of the original Russian version, while changing some minor details, singing about the blue kerchief, which will serve as a memory of the many wonderful meetings between two people (in later Russian versions, it is implied that that it is given to a woman by a man who is going off to war, and is thinking of her on the battlefield):

**Pureness and the blue color of the handkerchief
Fondling and the softness of the hand
You told me then, I will never forget again
I will never forget our meeting forever.**

I want to add a few words about the composer of the music, Jerzy Petersburski. Perhaps his most famous work is *The Last Sunday - Ta Ostatnia Niedziela* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8F7juh9Q-To>). Some of the readers may not know it, but they actually heard a part of its most beautiful rendition, in its original language, Polish, in the movie that many, if not all, of us have seen - "Schindler's List", in Oskar Schindler's birthday scene (where he also kisses a Jewish girl who brought him a birthday cake). The song (although not in the movie) was performed by a famous Polish singer Mieczyslaw Fogg, who worked closely with Jerzy Petersburski. A Christian man, Fogg lived in Warsaw throughout the Nazi occupation, during which time he was a member of the Polish underground. During the Warsaw uprising, he gave many concerts on the barricades, in hospitals, and in the bomb shelters. More importantly, in his apartment, Mieczyslaw Fogg hid a Jewish family of another musician, Ivo Wesby, for which he was later recognized as a Righteous Among the Nations, by Yad VaShem.

Dark (or Bright) is the Night (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gN1g8MZiooQ>)

Dark is the Night is another song of the World War II era, from 1943, written by composer Nikita Bogoslovsky to the words of a Soviet Jewish poet Vladimir Agatov (born Velvel Gurevich), sung in the movie "Two Soldiers", by a Jewish singer, Mark Bernes. It is a song-letter, from a soldier defending Leningrad in 1943 sung to his wife, somewhere far away. He sings about how thinking of her and his kids keeps him going, and how the thought of her waiting for him makes him unafraid of death, and feeling confident that nothing bad will happen to him. There is a Hebrew translation of the song, Laila Afal, by Ida Aradi - although I am not sure if it was ever put into a song by anyone. However, what was put to music is the Israeli version, Laila Bahir - The Bright Night. I am not sure who is the author of the words - I wasn't able to find this information (my apologies to the author). The words of the song in Hebrew are rather different from the Russian version. Yet despite the differences in the title and the words, the theme of the song remains - a soldier, this time at an outpost, is singing this song-letter to his beloved:

**Night is so bright
This in not a night and not a day
Suddenly, I saw a dream -
You understand, I miss home...**

Whether the night is dark or bright, whether it is in Hebrew or Russian, the song sounds very beautiful.

Forgotten Melody (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNAfI86oXCU>)

Despite the name, it is anything but. The original Russian song, *Murka*, a romance, is known to virtually everyone in my old neighborhood - from young to old. Moreover, it is probably the most popular street song as well as one of the token songs of the Russian criminal world, although its original version, reportedly, had nothing to do with criminal themes. Originally, from around the 1920's, there are over 20 different versions of the song, many of which tell a story of a woman at the head of a criminal structure, who turned out to be a secret police agent, and for that, paid with her life. It is not known who exactly wrote the music and lyrics, but at least a couple of Jewish authors are given credit for the words - some attribute the words to Yakov Yadov, others - to Oscar Strock. The Hebrew text, in the above version, sung by the great Yaffa Yarkoni, was written by Shmuel Fisher. It is a love song, a true romance, nothing to do with the classical version of *Murka*. However, there is also a true Hebrew translation of one of the popular Russian texts by Shaul Reznik (<http://shaul.tryam.com/translations-hebrew/murka/>), although I am not certain whether any musician has ever used it.

The White Cranes and Rav Goren

I decided to include these songs, even though the former has never become a very popular Israeli song, while the latter is not truly, a Russian song. Yet for several reasons, I felt compelled to include them.

White Cranes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfiPgaJ4jUw>)

reflects the thoughts about the soldiers fallen on a battlefield, who did not really die and were buried in the ground, but turned into white cranes, looking at us from above. The song was written by a Dagestan poet Rasul Gamzatov in his native Avar language, translated into Russian by a Jewish poet Naum Grebnev, himself a war veteran, with the music composed by a Jewish composer Yan Frenkel. The song was sung by a Jewish singer Mark Bernes, who I mentioned above. I felt compelled to include the song, which was translated into Hebrew by Zeev Geizel, as I am writing this piece on Israeli Yom Hazikaron,

with American Memorial Day in a few weeks, with additional holidays falling between these memorial days, including Yom Ha'Atzmaut, Yom Yerushalayim, Yom Hevron, as well as the VE Day, May 8, the latter also celebrated in my old country as the Victory Day on May 9. None of these would be possible without the sacrifice of countless soldiers. The song always reminds me of my paternal grandfather, killed in action in 1941, whose grave we have not (yet) found. The Hebrew song largely follows its Russian original:

**It seem to me sometimes that our soldiers
Which did not return from the war
Did not fall into our ground
But became white cranes**

The second song,

The Rabbi Goren (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zg_K5TWTr1M)

is not truly a Russian song, but a famous Klezmer tune, although the first rendition of the song that I heard was its Russian version, *Uncle Eli*, sung by a famous Russian Jewish musician Leonid Utesov. I included the song as this year we are marking the 50th anniversary of liberation of Yerushalayim, Yehuda and Shomron, as well as Rav Goren's 100th birthday. The Hebrew text was written by Yoram Taharlev, and used by a number of Israeli musicians, including Yaffa Yarkoni. Before our eyes arise pictures of Rav Goren, with his signature shofar in one hand and Torah scroll in the other, as we hear how the great Rabbi and general ran from battlefield to battlefield, from Har HaBayit to Kever Rachel, from Gaza to Hevron, from Sinai to Golan - during the whole 6 days that changed history, condensed into a very electrifying song!

The breakdown of the Iron Curtain and mass Aliyah from the former Soviet Union led to the reestablishment of political, economic and cultural ties between Israel and the former Soviet republics. These winds of change also did not leave behind the music industry, as many Israeli songs were picked up by Russian-language musicians and added to their repertoires. Like the Russian turned Israeli songs mentioned above, some Israeli songs in the countries of the former Soviet Union were performed in Ivrit, others - as translated versions of the Hebrew words, and some - with totally alternative lyrics having little, if anything, to do with the original Israeli songs. From Hebrew prayers to Naomi Shemer's classics, to modern mega-hits, Israeli songs made their way into Russian music. In many Russian restaurants, you will hear a Russian translation of the Israeli Eurovision 1998 winner, *Diva*, composed by Zvika Pik and Yoav Ginai, originally sung by Israel's (and perhaps the World's) best-known transgender singer, Dana International. Several pretty accurate translations of Naomi Shemer's classic, and my favorite song, *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*, have been adopted by a number of performers, including some "grands" of Russian music.

Another Naomi Shemer's classic,

Al Kol Eleh, has been translated - sung by a Russian/American Israeli tenor, Yevgeniy Shapovalov. The translation is as beautiful as if Naomi Shemer herself had written it in Russian.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnNaYY1QKp0>).

At my wedding, another then-popular Russian language songs, *Pink Flower* was sung. Only later, I recognized the tune as that of the late Uzi Hitman's Zionist hit, *Kan Noladeti - Here I Was Born*

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwZU88XCIJM&list=PL72546BA25BAB9CCB&index=4>).



Among the nearly 1 million Olim Chadashim from the former Soviet Union came many representatives of Soviet and Russian performing arts - among them, Vladimir Fridman - actor, comedian, singer, and overall multit talented individual. Those of you who have been to the Begin Heritage Center in Yerushalayim may have caught a glimpse of Vladimir Fridman - in one of the reenactments, he plays a NKVD officer in the Soviet Union, interrogating Menachem Begin (of note, wearing a totally historically incorrect uniform!). Already a successful entertainer in the old country, Fridman started his life in Israel as a sanitation man, but quickly excelled in his new country, performing songs in Russian and in Hebrew, starring in both Russian and Hebrew-language movie theater productions.

When Vladimir Fridman came across the above mentioned song *Kan Noladeti*, he wanted to include the song into his program - yet felt awkward singing it - after all, he wasn't born "Kan," and therefore, did not feel right singing it on a stage. A creative artist, Fridman turned the song into his own, very energizing version, with which I am going to finish this article.

Sham Noladeti - There I Was Born (<https://www.youtube.co/watch?v=VAussRd3N1U>)

In very simple Hebrew, Vladimir tells his story about being born "sham": going to kindergarten and school speaking Russian, but being a Jew in his heart, and hearing many stories about Eretz Israel, including the stories about the Six Day War, during which he was a child. There, he met his friends and future wife, in a country where millions of Jews still live. He continues telling his story: making Aliyah, learning Ivrit and proudly getting an Israeli Teudat Ze'ut. He concludes by proudly declaring: "Kan" I am now, together with my entire family, and with my friend, that may finally come, and we will sing together.

And on this happy note (again, no pun intended), I will conclude my chat. I hope you enjoyed this little voyage into the world of Israeli music with a Russian accent as much as I enjoyed writing about it. I hope that listening to these songs while thinking about Israel, will bring warmth to your heart and put a smile on your face - the same way as it does for me on an almost daily basis, making me appreciate Israel in a very special way, through my Russian/ American eyes.

In writing this article, I referred to the information posted on multiple websites, including but not limited to hebrewsongs.com, Wikipedia and YouTube, as well as several blogs, providing various information about Russian songs translated into Hebrew.

Dry Bones THE PASSOVER DEAL



Article written by Ariel Shemen - Jewish Resident of Yemenite descent living in the old Yemenite Village of Shiloach (Silwan)

The typical Jew comes to the Kotel and is moved by the sites that he sees; the walls of the Old City, the ancient graves on Har Ha'Zeitim; the streets paved in stone, with laughing children walking home from school. He sees the ruins of Jerusalem coming back to life with bustling streets and buses finding their way through Sha'ar Ha'Ashpot to bring in the thousands of visitors to the Kotel every day. The same Jew turns his head to the right, and sees a site that is less complimentary than what he has seen until now. He sees a slum, essentially, with crowded housing, built steeply against Ras El Amud. The Jew doesn't know exactly what these houses are, but he feels that a Jew probably shouldn't go there. If this Jew is able to muster courage he will go into the streets of these houses and find that instead of dumpsters, there are piles of garbage in the corners of the streets. When he pays more careful attention he will notice that the houses are built on top of burial caves from the time of the Kings of Judea.



Who would believe that a hundred fifty years ago the same hilltop was barren? Who would believe that only eighty years ago a flourishing community of Jews lived on this hilltop? Who would believe that the Jew's who lived here, lived peacefully with the Arab villagers in the vicinity, doing business with them and even earning their respect and appreciation?

Who would believe that those Jews worked the same fields that held Solomon's Royal Gardens, only to come home after dark to learn Torah into the late hours of the night, at one of the many shuls of the small community. There aren't many who believe, mostly, because there are so few who remember. However, for those who know, this memory and this belief is what inspires the future of Jerusalem.

My connection with Kfar Ha'Teimanim begins in New York. During the weeks before coming on a Nefesh B'Nefesh flight to Israel, I found a small book on my parent's bookshelf that caught my interest. It was an autobiographical diary, "Zachot Le'Avraham", written by Rabbi Avraham Al-Nadaf illustrating his Aliyah to Israel and his trials and tribulations in building the Land. Rabbi Al-Nadaf was the father of my grandmother's late husband, Rabbi Saadia, by second marriage. I remembered Rabbi Saadia vividly from when I was a child coming to visit my grandmother in Jerusalem. The memoir told about the rumors that spread like wildfire in Yemen after 1882, that the time for Redemption had come, and that everyone must come to the Land of Israel. Jews answered the call and made the journey to Jerusalem by the masses, to find that not all of their expectations were met. They found a barren land, cracked and dirtied walls of Jerusalem, and communities filled with poverty and even dysentery. Instead of giving up hope, these Yemenite Jews built a community of their own, outside of the city walls on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. They built a community that inspired the development of Jerusalem afterwards. They drank from the water of the Shiloach. They ate from the fields that they plowed. They maintained a community life that included shuls, yeshivas, schools, a medical clinic, businesses and much more. At the peak of this wonderful community's history which they called Kfar Ha'Shiloach almost four hundred souls populated this hilltop. Rabbi Al-Nadaf was one of the founders of Kfar HaShiloach and I saw myself following in his footsteps, coming to the Land of Israel and dreaming to building it.



Kfar HaShiloach, 1891
credit: wikipedia

However could I compare myself to the "mesirut nefesh" of the Jews who came to Kfar Ha'Shiloach? After beginning service in the IDF, I was looking for places to spend Shabbat. A friend told me that there's a community next to the Old City with nine families, associated with Ateret Cohanim and that they are looking for Yeshiva students to help them with a minyan. I was happy to find a place to do Shabbat and to do a mitzvah in the same time.

"Who are they? Where are they?" I asked. "It's called Kfar Ha'Teimanim. It's one of the projects under the auspices of Ateret Cohanim that has been rebuilt upon the ruins of Kfar Ha'Shiloach." Now my attention was caught. Is this the same Kfar Ha'Shiloach that my "mishpacha" Rabbi Al-Nadaf founded? Is this the same place that was inspired by the eternal dream to come to Jerusalem by Yemenite Jews, a hundred fifty years ago? This was a place I had to see. "You should know though," said the friend, "you'll need security to go there."

Erev Shabbat I waited by the corner outside Sha'ar Ha'Ashpot next to the Kotel. An armored jeep with bullet proof windows drove up towards me. Two security guards with beeping communication radios welcomed me into the car. During an almost ten minute ride, we weaved through the steep, winding streets of Silwan. Somewhere in the middle we heard thuds on the roof. It seems that a number of heavy objects were projected towards our jeep. One of the security guards told me not to worry. Usually the jeep is hit by Molotov cocktails, and mere stone throwing is not something to be concerned about. We arrived at Beit Yonatan, a six story building with a long Israeli flag draped down it's middle. I was taken into the building and Efrayim greeted me with a warm smile and a plate of cookies. Welcome to Kfar Ha'Teimanim. You have a bed in the guest apartment upstairs. Feel free to take a shower by us, while there's still hot water from the boiler. Friday night I sat by Efrayim's Shabbat table. His children sang songs of Yerushalayim and his wife took out their wedding album, showing their extended family. Efrayim learns in the kollel on the top floor of Beit Yonatan, and at the Shabbat table opened a discussion on the subjects in the Parsha, that all of the members of the table took part. In the middle of the meal we smelt smoke. While looking out the window it seems that a Molotov cocktail was thrown at the building and had ignited one of the olive trees next to the building. Efrayim sighed in annoyance and closed the window while continuing the Dvar Torah.

The next morning, davening was held at the kollel, attended by the members of the community. After davening I was taken into the home of Eldad whose meal followed similarly in its beauty and devotion to that of Efrayim's, the night before. Eldad told, as a matter of fact, that Kfar Ha'Teimanim's existence today, plays a central role in the dynamics of the Middle East. He explained that in discussions to split Jerusalem to allow for a Palestinian capital, and for a Palestinian state, part of the claims that have been made, is that Jews don't live in the eastern part of the city and that there isn't really anything to lose. However, now that Jews live legally according to the books in all parts of Jerusalem, even Silwan, that claim is much more difficult to make, essentially preventing Jerusalem from being divided. On top of that, the community's existence, demands from the police and other authorities to take these parts of Jerusalem more seriously. As opposed to previously where Silwan was more akin to the Wild West, or "wild east", now potential terrorists think twice before making this area a safe house for terrorism. "However," said Eldad, "All of that are side benefits. The real reason we are here is because Am Yisrael has to live in their natural home, and that is Jerusalem. There is no need to explain what that means." The rest of Shabbat I was blown away, inspired and just in awe of these ideological residents of Jerusalem. Before me I saw people who are enormous; people that are building Jerusalem in the most literal way possible. While doing so, these people act in such modesty and humility that on the streets you would never be able to tell what type of people you are dealing with.

Before Seuda Shlishit, Eldad took me on the rooftop of Beit Yonatan and pointed to Beit Ha'Dvash, the second building in Kfar Ha'Teimanim. In Beit Ha'Dvash, lives a single family, the Tanaami family, of Yemenite decent, who have been living in the old Yemenite Village since 2004. (From the very beginning). Beit Ha'Dvash, Eldad tells me, receives an average of forty Molotov cocktails a week. I thought to myself, more than what that number says about who throws the Molotov cocktails, it says about the Tanaami family, who defiantly continue to live in their home. Eldad also noted that next to Beit Ha'Dvash is the central shul of the old Kfar Ha'Shiloach, that is recognizable by the domes on top of the building. From the shul, essentially, continues the original home of Kfar Ha'Shiloach, all of which are inhabited today by illegal looters. The dream is for one day to daven in the original shul next to Beit Ha'Dvash, so Eldad tells me. At the end of Shabbat, Ilan, one of the other guests that Shabbat, who is a veteran in Beit Yonatan spoke with me. He told me how amazing it is to see, how someone comes to Kfar Ha'Teimanim for the first time and doesn't come out the same person. Indeed, I did not come out the same.

I became addicted to this amazing place; to see dozens of children playing on the rooftop playground with security guards keeping an eye on them; to see how families bring in their weekly groceries in the armored jeep; how Shmuel, one of the community children, starts his day by running to the window to see if the Beit HaMikdash was built yet. I understood that I was introduced to another definition of what it means to be Israeli, where the residents of Kfar Ha'Teimanim, are who decide the definition. While I spent more than half a year crawling in mud in basic training, I would leave the army for Shabbat to come to Kfar Ha'Teimanim, and see how kids in diapers knew what it meant to be dedicated for Klal Yisroel by simply being themselves. There is no doubt in my mind that the core of the Jewish people

coming back to life, was happening here. Over the course of the next couple years I would come to Kfar Ha'Teimanim many times to help with a minyan. It is clear to me, however, that I gained much more from them, then what they benefited from my help with a minyan.

A number of years afterwards I find myself married with kids living in Beit Ovadia, one of the newly purchased buildings in Kfar Ha'Teimanim. After nine years of the Kfar consisting of nine families and two buildings, today Kfar Ha'Teimanim consists of nineteen families, five buildings, and thanks to Ateret Cohanim and its many donors and investors, more than a hundred residents. The central shul is in use, and is a continuation of Beit Ha'Dvash. Every morning the community hosts Shacharit there. No longer do residents have to rely on an armored jeep to take them in and out of their homes, due to the new buildings, a consistent line of Jewish homes, lead to the short walk, up to the Kotel. To help the families make the climb up to the Old City, to bring kids to school, we now have a full size tour bus that takes the families every morning.

Once in a while I meet "old time Yemenite Jews" who remember themselves growing up in Kfar Ha'Shiloach. They tell me about the simplicity and the happiness that exemplified the people there. They tell me about how much they regret not to be back in Kfar Ha'Shiloach, today. I tell them, our doors are open, and they are welcome to come visit.

Today Kfar Ha'Teimanim does not need "outside" yeshiva students to help us make a minyan on Shabbat. However, we would still like to double and triple our Jewish presence in the area and we invite Klal Yisroel to come and see what it means to build Jerusalem in our days.

מועדים לשמחה לגאולה שלמה



*Thank you for reading issue 2 of the YIW Presents I on Israel.
If you are interested in contributing to the next issue,
please contact joelbryk@gmail.com*