**December 2024**

Hi all,

Can you believe it, in a couple of weeks’ time, it will be 10 months since we made Aliyah.

I grew up in Southgate, North London in the 1960s and 1970s. In my local primary school, many of my friends were the children of Greek Cypriot immigrants. My best friend was Andrew Paniotoo (At least that was how it was pronounced). These were middle class people, but I well remember that Andrew had to translate for his parents when it came to dealing with the school and I remember being quite confused that these people spent their time listening exclusively to the news from their home countries. I couldn’t understand why they would care about what was going on there now that they were British.

Well, here I am 50 or so years later and my sisters-in-law have to help me with translation (They didn’t have Google Translate in those days!), and guess what, we have all the UK TV channels and I listen all day to good old LBC. I watched the debate in the Commons on Friday about assisted dying and I love catching Prime Ministers Questions on a Wednesday. Why do I care? I don’t live in the UK anymore. Of course, as it says in the Good Book – “You can take the Jews out of Egypt, but you can’t take Egypt out of the Jews”. I don’t understand Israeli politics and frankly not sure I want to, but even if I did, somehow, I don’t really feel they are “my politicians”. Much as I’m delighted to be an Israeli Citizen, somehow I’m coming to understand that this feeling is more about my spiritual and social journey. I never was a huge Zionist in the political sense and Roz and I really do still feel like we’re visitors to The State of Israel – very strange.

This is all getting very deep, but I also realised something really important the other day. I’ve mentioned to you before how important for my mental health, the work I am doing is. So I was chatting to an American lady who lives here with her husband who was a communal rabbi who retired to make Alyah a year or so ago. She told me that he really struggled for quite a while to find himself here. We have a wonderful life without question – beautiful weather, TG a super home, we watch the sun rise and set over the sea which is just Heavan, and we are gradually developing a great social life. But, of course as most of you know me well – you know that I have ‘Macher’ and ‘Yachner’ in my DNA and sitting at home watching TV, reading and walks to the coffee shops are just not enough for me. I always expressed myself through my work and although I am doing so through my work so far, I can see that this won’t be for ever. I am going to have to reinvent me! Suggestions on the back of postcard please.

Please don’t think I’m depressed about it, but it is a challenge and whether it’s the Shul community, some unsuspecting community group, I can feel that I really will need to start rolling up my sleeves and seeing how I can add value.

Ulpan – Oh dear…..So I attend on line on Monday and Thursday evenings and its quite a challenge for me. The level is about right but the lesson is only in Hebrew so if you don’t understand, you have to work out what you think they are going on about – Yuch….why can’t they just tell me in English? In addition, as I’m sure you can understand that most of it goes in one ear very well indeed….and comes straight out the other a second or two later. Having said that, it is improving my vocab at least and I have started to understand one or two more things on signs and when Israelis are shouting at me!!

Roz and I have been practicing Israeli social essentials like hooting at traffic lights immediately it turns green, pushing in, telling the person in front of you off for…….anything really, and when you’re in the way, making sure you move out the way as slowly as possible with a face that says “I so don’t care that I’m in your way”. On the upside though, it is lovely when the shop assistant wishes you Shabbat Shalom. It’s a weird thing, with all the rudeness and rough outer exterior, you can see that most Israelis will always stop and help you if they can see you are struggling. Just don’t expect anybody to say thank you! Its really funny – it’s the law here that you must stop for somebody crossing on a zebra crossing (on the spot fines if you’re caught). But you can always see an Anglo person as they’re the ones who say thank you as they cross. When our grandchildren don’t say thank you, we tell them off, but we know it’s a lost cause as nobody else in their lives has any interest in such politeness.

Which leads me nicely to the last but most important thing. It is such a blessing to be able to see our grandchildren almost every week. Our youngest, little Hadassah just started crawling and she has a smile that lights up your heart. What more can you ask for – the greatest blessing of all.

Oh, and guess what, after about 10 years of full-time learning, my son Adam has started a 5 year Semicha programme to become a Rabbi. I’m going to be The Father of The Rabbi. There can’t be many professions where you are expected to train for that many years and then get paid peanuts, but I guess its good for the soul, or so he tells me. Rabbi Goldschneider……has a wring to it I guess.

Hoping this finds you all well and thriving, you and your families – please don’t hesitate to be in touch with me directly. I love to catch up and love to hear about how you’re getting on. Oh and now peace is starting to inch forward here, do please let me know if you’re coming!! The Nespresso is ready and willing.

Warmest regards,

Neville