

The Goodman's Blog

Chapter 91

August 2020

ALIYAH IN OUR 60's FROM ARLINGTON HTS, IL TO CAESAREA, ISRAEL (Part 91)

SUZANNE & HOWIE GOODMAN



Howie and Suzanne Goodman were valued members at Beth Judea until they decided to make aliyah in 2009. The Goodmans have agreed to provide us with a blog on their experiences as new olim in Israel. Though we continue to miss the Goodmans, we can all look forward to reading about their adventures in Israel through their blog.

Aliyah in Our 60's – August 2020 - Part 91

Coronavirus is still the primary concern for everyone in Israel. After several months of isolation and businesses closing down, there is much easing of the quarantine. Israel has been one of the most successful in the world in the pandemic, however the cases are now shooting up. On July 10, there were 10,000 positive tests. The death toll has been low at 332, and so far there hasn't been a medical overload. Restaurants and stores have been reopened with certain requirements. Face masks are required, most places take temperatures, and most people are following the rules. Police can give a 500-shekel ticket (\$120.00) to anyone not wearing a mask in public. Over 4,000 tickets were handed out the weekend of July 10th. Synagogues are allowed to open with up to 19 present and distancing. Parks and pools are closed. Some schools have had to close again due to student and teachers being tested positive. Summer camps are operating on a limited basis, and government and schools are working on a plan for the fall. It is still a struggle, and no one knows when it will end. Prime Minister Netanyahu stated that Israel reopened too quickly and too soon.

We have had a relative who was tested because of coughing and fever and several friends who also required testing. Their testing was done quickly and professionally. Best of all, they were clear. Luckily, Caesarea has not had any Covid-19, for which we are grateful.

A key tool in containing the spread of the virus is epidemiological or contact testing. This is a phone app investigation that seeks to identify and send in to self-quarantine all those who may have been in contact with patients in the days prior to positive testing. This works, however recently with the huge increase in cases the system crashed. Some messages were sent to people in error, and all the calls could not be handled.

ALIYAH IN OUR 60's (continued from previous page)

Part of the reason for the spike in the number of people being interested in making aliyah is the prevalence in confidence in remote working caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. There is the realization that one can keep one's US-based job and do it from Israel. On this same principle, the KKL-JNF have a goal to move 1.5 million people to Israel's periphery. In the advent of working at home and at remote locations, their plan is to establish high tech power ecosystems in Israel's north and south. They are doing this with the help of Jewish communities and Israel's government as partners. They have launched their first innovation center near the Sea of Galilee and there are many similar centers on the way.

The new Minister of Aliyah and Integration is Pnina Tamano-Shata, and this is an important milestone for Israel. This is the first time that there has ever been a minister of Ethiopian descent, and she is the first black person in the government. She was born in Wuzaba in northern Ethiopia in 1981. When she was 3 years old, her family, like thousands of other Jewish families, was facing starvation and abuse in a refugee camp in Sudan. Eventually, her family reached trucks meant to take them to a plane that would fly them to the place of their dreams, Jerusalem. They were part of thousands that escaped to Israel in Operation Moses. Pnina has been an MK with the political party Yesh Atid. She left them to join the Benny Gantz led half of the Blue and White faction that decided to enter a unity coalition with Likud. She felt that after three elections in a row, politics were at a standstill and there needed to be a unity government. "We came to Israel in 1984 because of two things...the love of the Land of Israel and the Jewish people. I was raised to believe in unity as a value," she said. Plus, as she points out, Gantz was one of the IDF officers who went to Sudan to help bring Ethiopian Jewry to Israel. She said, "It was an honor to get this appointment from him."

Recent inquiries and applications show that there may be 90,000 new *olim* in the next 18 months. The new Integration Minister is aware of the difficulties some olim have faced. She realizes that mass aliyah will not happen if those who arrive first experience serious difficulties, so measures are being worked on to ease the assimilation into life in Israel.



Rock formation from lava

Zooming is taking off. We went on a Zoom tiyul to the Golan Heights. It was organized by a guide that we use for our Shearim tours. He spent a day hiking and taking pictures that he showed today to 57 participants. He explained the trail, wildlife, historic places such as the Nimrod Castle, and artifacts on the trail. While we missed being outside on an actual tiyul, it was pretty nice watching it from our couch while eating popcorn.

Howie got to be a part of Evan Rumack's photography class on Zoom. Since we are 8 hours ahead of you timewise it doesn't always work out. Suzanne wanted to be part of Karen Nagel's send-off Zoom but didn't manage to pull herself out of bed to do it at 4 in the morning- unlike Adrian Justus, a renowned violinist, who did a Zoom concert from Mexico for Shearim. He did his brilliant performance at 4 AM for a noon performance here.



Carrot flower in Golan photographed by Aiton Birnbaum Zoom Tiyul near Nimrod Fortress Golan Heights

Annexation or sovereignty, what does it mean and what may happen if implemented? Nobody appears to know. The term "Annexation" is used by anti-Israel factions while the term "Sovereignty" is used by those in favor of a larger Israel.

Including 1949, there have been four times when Israel has changed its sovereignty. After 1967, Israel brought Israeli law to parts of Jerusalem and the Old City by a Knesset vote in 1980. In 1981, Israel annexed the Golan Heights that was captured from Syria in 1967. It withdrew from the Sinai in 1982. In 2005, Israel left Gaza. Finally, in 2019 Israel gave back in some land belonging to Jordan.

When will it happen is a real question. Two major reasons may give the answer. One is the International Criminal Court looking at war crimes because of settlements in the West Bank. The other is the United States election that may have President Trump replaced by former Vice-President Biden. It must happen before the campaigns get heated. The connection between the Trump Plan and annexation is complex. To follow the Trump Plan is a very difficult procedure. Many of the settlers are not enamored with Trump's plan.

Another question is the connection with Palestinian statehood. Trump's plan discusses Israel annexing 30% of the West Bank. The PA has rejected anything that doesn't call for pre-1967 borders.

The West Bank is the area captured from Jordan in 1967. Through the use of Israeli military jurisdiction and civilian rule, there are some 430 settlements with about 430,000 settlers. The Oslo Accords divided the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C. That left 40% of the West Bank under PA rule with areas A and B. Area C was under Israeli military and civilian rule. Some 2.2 million Palestinians live in areas A and B and about 300,000 in Area C.

Prior to WWI, the Ottoman Empire had control of the area. After WWI, Britain took control. In 1948, Britain relinquished the West Bank, and Jordan took it over in 1949 until the Six Day War. In 1988, Jordan relinquished any control over the area. This area has never been a country.

We read that the IDF has not seen a map. The settler leaders have not seen a map, and neither has the public. Nevertheless, annexation seems to be moving ahead – despite warnings from the IDF and the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) that such a move could lead to a collapse of the Palestinian Authority.

Also, a very recent poll stated only one third of Israelis are in favor of annexation. The collapse of the PA is considered by the Defense Ministry to be the worst-case scenario. On the scale of what might happen, a third intifada is surprisingly considered less harmful for Israel on a strategic level. There will be terror, but there is a belief that the IDF knows how to fight back. While it might take time, there is confidence in the IDF that it will succeed. AIPAC recently gave the green light to US lawmakers to oppose annexation. Sanctions against Israel are rumored to be possible by the European Union if annexation goes forward.

But the collapse of the Palestinian Authority would be a whole new issue. The reason this might happen is because, for the Palestinians, annexation is the end of the Oslo paradigm, which not only brought the PA into existence, but also launched the process of separation between Israel and its Palestinian neighbors. If Mahmoud Abbas shuts down the PA, that means Israel will have to step in. Israeli soldiers will once again have to take charge of the health system, the education system, and the sewage pipes in Ramallah, Nablus, and Tulkarm. These are jobs no commander will want to oversee and no Israeli mother will want her child doing.

But while all eyes seem fixed on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his meetings with the different settler leaders – those who oppose annexation because it is not enough and those who recognize the historic opportunity and support it – the person who might actually influence the process more than anyone else is Defense Minister Benny Gantz.

In the fall of 2021, under the coalition agreement, Benny Gantz will become Prime Minister of Israel for one- and one-half years.

Why might this be the case? It is important to first understand how annexation happens. Based on a legislative amendment made in 1967, all that is needed is a vote in the cabinet for land that was part of Mandatory Palestine to become part of the State of Israel. That is how Levi Eshkol annexed east Jerusalem after the Six Day War, and that is how Netanyahu could potentially annex parts of the West Bank.

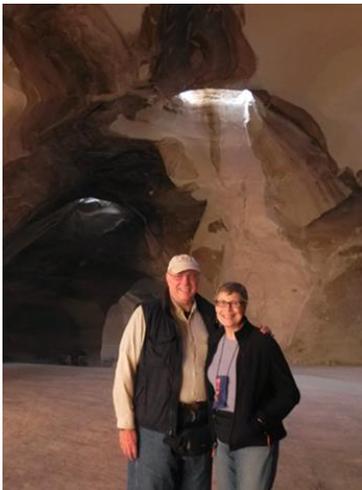
Nineteen of the ministers in the cabinet today are from Likud and its Haredi allies; the other 16 are from Blue and White and Labor. While Netanyahu could theoretically bring an annexation vote to the cabinet and win even if Gantz and his party vote against it, speculation is that Netanyahu is unlikely to do so. As a result, the most important question is not what does this settler leader or that settler leader want, but rather what is Gantz willing to accept.

Gantz's official position on annexation is currently unclear. Nevertheless, there is a lot that can be done between annexation of 30% which Netanyahu originally said he wanted and annexing nothing. This could mean the annexation of just the Jordan Valley or just Ma'ale Adumim and Gush Etzion. A few years ago, settler leaders would have jumped at either of these opportunities.

The whole situation is as fluid as the elections in Israel have been. The Palestinian Authority has stated that if annexation occurs, they will counter with declaring a State of Palestine with pre-1967 borders. Gantz recently stated that the COVID-19 pandemic should be the focus of the government- especially because of the tremendous spike in cases. Abbas recently stated he wanted to renew peace talks.

We hope that all of the changes and suffering from the Coronavirus will rapidly improve. Sorry we won't be visiting Chicago in September as planned. Keep up your good spirit at Beth Judea and we hope the skies will open up soon!

Suzanne and Howie



-The opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not represent those Congregation Beth Judea- ed.

We hope you enjoy this installment from the Goodmans, who have graciously agreed to blog for our congregation their experiences as Olim in Israel. If there are specific topics that you are interested in hearing about or if you just want to stay in touch with Howie and Suzanne, you can reach them at: HOWIEG@aol.com