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Archives

Baruchim Habaim Ct residents fulfill their dream of moving to Israel

By Sujata Srinivasan

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It's only a matter of days before Ithamar Ephreim Pollak, 78, and his wife Miriam, 71, bid goodbye to their home on Dyer Street in New Haven n where they lived for four decades and raised four children n and make aliyah (which in Hebrew means "ascending to Israel").

The Pollaks are among a group of olim (people who make aliyah) whose relocation was orchestrated by Nefesh B'Nefesh (NBN), a Jerusalem-based nonprofit organization which helps Jews from the U.S. and Canada to immigrate to Israel.

"Before we started our organization [in 2002], there were only 1,200 American Jews moving to Israel each year. Today, it's tripled," says Charley Levine, spokesman for NBN. He adds that NBN alone has 17,000 Jews in its pipeline who are either ready to go tomorrow or thinking about moving in about two years.

The Pollaks are headed to a fully-furnished rented apartment in Petach Tikvah, east of Tel Aviv. Their oldest daughter, who made aliyah 22 years ago, lives nearby with her family.

Ithamar and his father, survivors of Auschwitz, immigrated to the U.S. from Germany in 1947. The teenager had lost his mother, three sisters, and maternal grandparents in the concentration camp.

"I wanted to go to the Promised Land but my father said that since I had no trade or skills, I should come to the States with him and get an education," he says. "From early childhood, I've been dreaming of the land where the patriarchs lived. That dream lived on and now I have a chance to fulfill it. Life has its own...you start a career, you start a family, and there were all kinds of intermediate situations. Now there are no more excuses." There was a pragmatic element too.

"I'm getting too old to maintain this home and want to move to something smaller," he says.

Once in Israel, Ithamar plans to contemplate upon the history of his people and the cultural institution they've established.

"I'll read the papers and attend lectures and performances," he explains. "Essentially I don't expect my lifestyle to change a whole lot. I'm retired here and I will be retired there as well. I will occasionally do some voluntary work in the community."

Formerly a professor of chemistry at Quinnipiac University, Ithamar says he will undoubtedly miss America.

"What I'm going to miss most is the liberty and freedom that this country has offered," he says. "The most impressive thing that I can think of is that not once was I stopped by a policeman and asked for my identification. This was inconceivable in communist Hungary and under the fascist Germans. It will be difficult to leave all the friends we have in New Haven and the state. But hopefully we will have an occasion to get together with them again, either here or in Israel."



Western Mass Edition

A voracious reader, he has packed 50 boxes brimming with books n primarily historical and literary. Plans are on the drawing board to also have some fun in the kitchen.

“One [of the books] is a cookbook,” he says. “It has pictures of utensils and everything. Even a non-chemist can follow the recipes!”

Miriam, a sculptor, says, “It’s something we’ve wanted to do for a long time and we’re getting too old to put it off. We’re Orthodox Jews, and it will be wonderful to be in a country that has the same kind of rhythm and cycle daily and annually that we are used to n the Jewish holidays, for example. The whole country is in a different time zone n a Jewish time zone. I’m looking forward to being a part of that rhythm.”

Miriam escaped the horrors of a concentration camp because her father managed to obtain Aryan papers for his family.

“We pretended to be Christians. We went to a little village, it was towards the end of the war, and then the Russians came and liberated us,” she says.

She too will miss New Haven, she says, particularly the Creative Arts Workshop where she took classes in metal sculpture for 30 years. “I’m hoping to find some kind of artistic outlet there,” she says. “I hope we’ll be healthy and lots of happy surprises will be happening.”

Stories from the Promised Land

Rachel Brown, 26, and her sister Elana, 22, of West Hartford, the daughters of Dr. Jeryl Brown and Scott Brown, made aliyah on July 9 and are at an absorption center in Ra’anana, outside of Tel Aviv, where they plan to settle down. Already, Rachel has several job offers and will most likely take a position in human resources. Elana plans to waitress, teach English, take ulpan and save up for travel to India, Nepal and Vietnam.

“They’re very, very happy to be in Israel,” says their mother. She says that when she was in her 20s, she too wanted to make aliyah.

“It didn’t happen because life took a different turn for me. So I understand how they feel and I admire their wanting to follow this adventure.”

Shayna Rudolph, 25, daughter of Alison and Jeff Rudolph of West Hartford, was also among the group of olim who made aliyah on July 9.

“Making aliyah is the ultimate support [one can show for] Israel,” says her father.

Shayna is at an absorption Center in Jerusalem, which will be her home for the next five months.

A librarian by profession, “I have some volunteer opportunities in libraries and will start my work in a few weeks,” she writes via e-mail. She did a library science internship at a library in Afula last summer and has many friends in Israel as a result of her family having hosted Israelis. She also spent time in Israel on an archaeological dig and took conversational Hebrew at the University of Hartford.

Giliah Ruth Librach, 24, also made aliyah on July 9 while her brother Max, 21, is in Amman, Jordan, studying Arabic on a U.S. Department of State scholarship.

“I’m very proud of him and our daughter,” says their father, Rabbi Clifford Librach of the United Jewish Center in Danbury.

Giliah is a product of Camp Yavneh in New Hampshire, the South Area Solomon Schechter Day School in Stoughton, Mass., and the Prozdor high school of Hebrew College, but never thought about aliyah until recently, her father says.

Giliah is at the same Jerusalem absorption center as Shayna Rudolph, and after her stay there, she plans to obtain a doctorate in neuroscience.

"I'm doing wonderful," she says, when contacted over the phone by this reporter. "It's been nothing but amazing. People start talking to me on the street, asking me if I made aliyah because they can tell I've been struggling a bit with my Hebrew. They say 'Congratulations! Welcome home.' It's just amazing to go out on the street or to a store or restaurant and have people say that to you."

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" You can see other people that followed their dreams at:
<http://www.jr.co.il/pictures/israel/history/2007/a117.htm> Have a good aliyah, Jacob "

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