

WELCOME HOME by Lynette Karp

I remember as a student of preschool education, coming to the realisation that, while the three year graduate course at college was most interesting and enlightening in terms of the steps of child development and practical information on activities and educational ideas to reach these fertile minds, the reality was that one actually only learnt what Nursery School teaching really was, when you entered your school and became responsible for your own precious group of children entrusted to your care and influence.

I remembered this when a lifetime later we came to Israel on Aliyah. How grateful I was for all the assistance given us on a very practical level by the official organisations both in South Africa and here in Israel. But on a very emotional and even spiritual level, it is living in Israel that teaches you what Aliyah is all about and there are lessons learnt that can only come from experience. Similarly, I can only speak of what has proven to be relevant for us.

As we had no idea where we would be living and my experience of holidays in Israel had presented us mainly with much smaller apartments than the spacious home we left in South Africa, we elected to only bring essential and adaptable furnishings with us. Consequently, we brought our beds, mattresses and plenty of linen in the event that sizes were different in Israel. We brought one entrance hall folding card table both for practical use and for the sentimental attachment to the item, specially made for my late father by a dear cousin of his and inherited by me when my folks sold up their home.

I also have a large mirror that graced my parents' home. My husband enjoys collecting wine and a few precious bottles of his collection of South African wine (which caused much hassle in getting permission to bring in) were lovingly packed together with the wine cabinet I had bought him for a fortieth birthday present many years previously. Just in passing, we have drunk the wine up that survived the trip to Israel and replaced the bottles with fantastic Israeli wines. This is just one of the local industries that has developed world class recognition in the last decade.

We chose to buy new electrical appliances in Israel to take advantage of the guarantees offered. Deciphering the work manuals has proved quite a challenge as they are all of course written in Hebrew – but generally have simple illustrations attached which are easier to interpret. We distributed and sold paintings that we had accumulated over the years, bringing only a few of our favourites with us- but certainly sufficient to recreate the ambience and atmosphere of the comfortable and lovely home that we left. Buying suitable lounge and dining room furniture was easy. In no time at all as our apartment took shape. We felt comfortably at home surrounded by so much that was familiar

The expression that we heard so often when we left, of “uprooting” ourselves from South Africa has tremendous relevance. We found the `roots' we brought with us helped in our settling in process.

And what were they? It was what was old and familiar –my old kitchen knife that I used daily back in the old country, - the tin opener and wonderful mincer that I rescued from my late Mom's home together with her personal recipe book in her handwriting, filled with the magic of Mom's cooking, have pride of place in the nook that is my kitchen here in Israel. The same simple clock that marked the minutes in South Africa, ticks away on our wall here. Our work room is decorated from floor to ceiling with the sports memorabilia of my husband's youth from school to national soccer teams including the Maccabi team of 1961 that brought him to Israel for the first time.

The cabinet in this work room houses his lifetime collection of music and books. Home came here with us in the form of artifacts and photographs, notebooks and photograph albums – tape recordings and video cassettes. Our background is present with us surrounding us daily and our present is rich with the memories and adornments of the years gone by.



In the spare room, hangs a cross- stitch work of little value –'The Donkey's Serenade' is written in embroidery across the top I am told (as it is in Russian). This work was crafted by my late grandmother on flax, grown on their farm in Memel and woven into the linen she worked on. It is over 100 years old. Could it ever be discarded by me? No, I am the last of her living descendants to remember her. My children can one day get rid of it. It adds to my contentment, an immediate feeling of being `settled in', bringing my background with me.

Aliyah cannot be without hurdles to overcome and challenges to face – but there are so many little things that make it all easier, like not creating too many new situations –the familiar is so comfortable and reassuring.

This is our springboard to the future!

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A word about me:

My early years living in a small country village in South Africa have been a major influence on who I became as an adult. South Africa will always be a living memory in my heart of the people and the places.

This article was written two years after coming on Aliyah and making Israel our beloved home.

Date written: 2010

Date Posted on the CHOL Share your Story Site August, 2022