

**don't put
your
dreams
in the
hands of
others.**

by Yitzhak Sasson



photograph by Shara Kopstein

The following little story seems to be quite common. Perhaps you've had similar experiences. Maybe others have discouraged or intimidated you from doing what you want to do. *In the end, who will look back with regret?*

Little Shmueli is 7 years old, comfortably curled up on the sofa and devouring a picture book of Israel and its holy sites. He looks up at his mother who had just come into the room and announces with bursting enthusiasm, "Mommy, I going to move to Israel! It looks really fun there. Can we move Mommy? Can we?" His mother looks at him, smiles and sweetly says, "No, sorry sweetie, your father has a good job here. Anyway the Israeli kids are really too rough. You might get hurt. Maybe someday, but not now."

Years later, Shmueli is 16 and filled with dreams and ambition. Sitting in his cozy suburban Goshen home he dreamily looks at Goshen Yeshiva's senior class trip pictures of Israel on Facebook and asks his father, "Abba, looking at all these cool pictures of Israel really makes me want to go there. The Cohens already made aliyah, and so have two of the other boys in my class, why don't we?" His father looks up from his sefer, "It's not a good idea to disrupt your yeshiva learning,

Shmueli. Learning in Israel is a lot different and it might be hard on you. And anyway, Mashiach will come some day soon and we will all go there!"

Shmueli has grown up to be a fine young man of 21 and in his third year of Goshen Yeshiva Beit Midrash. After learning the halachot of Sheviit, and learning deeper about the holy land of Eretz Yisrael he feels that familiar yearning for Israel and decides to consult his Rebbe, "Learning the halachot of Sheviit has stirred up feelings to make aliyah, you know, and get land of my own so I can fulfill those mitzvot. Anyway, isn't it where we belong? What do you think?"

His rebbe smiles and nods to his idealism. "It's true, it's a big mitzvah to make aliyah and live in Eretz Yisrael. But right now I fear it is not a good time. You're still young and your father has got college plans for you starting next year, right? You have your whole life to make aliyah – don't get all worked up about it now. Think of your future."

Shmuel is now 28 years old, married with three beautiful children, a degree in programming, and a brand new apartment in the new Jewish community development near Goshen. After the Shabbat drasha about the meraglim, Shmuel is feeling stoked and approaches Rabbi Greenberg with his life-long nagging question. "Rabbi," he says with a hint of optimism. "I have been thinking a lot about making aliyah lately. The kids are still young, my wife is very interested and I can support the family as a programmer. We even found a few nice communities to check out. I think we can make it work. What do you think?" Rabbi Greenberg looks up from the tallit in his hands, gives Shmuel a rueful smile and without hesitation delivers his heartfelt opinion without mincing words, "Bad idea. The government is filled with wicked people, Israeli children will be hard on your kids, your standard of living won't be nearly the same. Stay here. You have a nice home, cars, a night seder – what more could you ask for? Wait a few more years, when your kids are older."

At age 35 Shmuel has two more kids and has advanced in his programming career. His oldest is 14 years old and is doing well in school. After months of news stories and pictures of Nefesh B'Nefesh aliyah flight arrivals he decides to call the Rosh Yeshiva of Goshen Yeshiva and speak to him about making aliyah – this time for real. "...we would like to make aliyah," he says after a moment of silence. "We can support ourselves financially, our kids are doing well in school. I would like to seriously look into it. What does the Rosh Yeshiva think?" "Shmuel, I have known you a long time," says the Rosh Yeshiva, "and have seen you grow to be quite a talmid chacham and a baal hesed. But... you have to know that your son may not

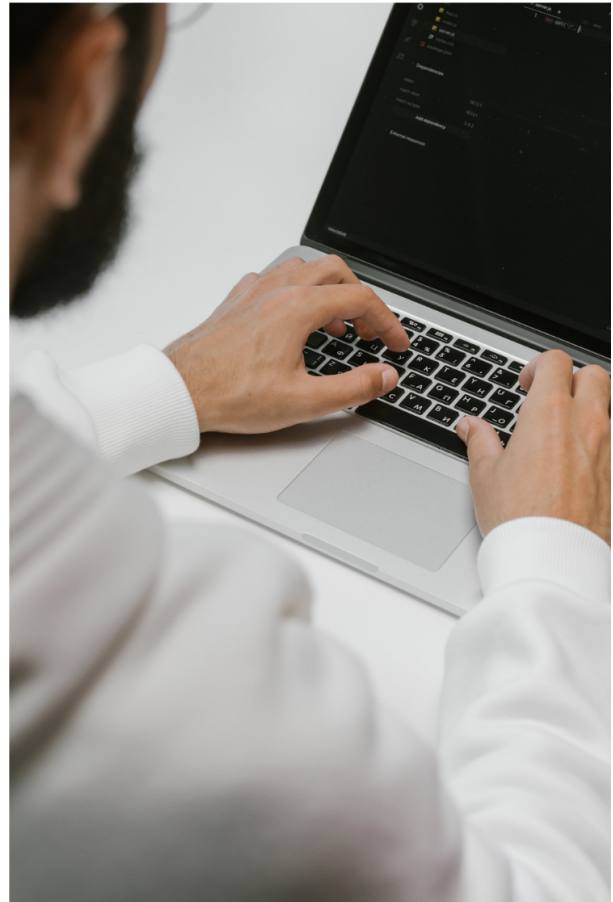


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'find himself' in Israel. You have to think about your kids – and what's best for them. I know you want to make aliyah, and have for years, but Goshen is good for you and you are good for Goshen. You have plenty of time to make aliyah."

Shmuel reluctantly agrees and tries to put the matter out of his mind.

Ten years later, two kids are married and three are still in school. His life is full and meaningful but Shmuel has still not been able to shake his desire for aliyah. In fact, it's getting stronger. After hearing about an old friend's aliyah experience, he wonders to himself, 'maybe now is the right time'.

In a hushed tone, Shmuel turns to Yaakov, his long-time chavruta and says, "I just got an email from an old friend who made aliyah a couple of years ago." After a brief pause, Shmuel continues, "He says it's the best thing he has done and his family loves it!"

"Man," says Yaakov sympathetically, stirring his coffee. "I would put that on the back burner if I were you. A lot of kids go off the derech. It's a big problem. Maybe you should move when all your kids are grown and on their own."

At age 61, Shmuel is starting to feel the weight of his years. True, his children are all married and settled, and he can look back contentedly at his life, but still he feels something inside calling him. One day while making plans for

retirement with his friend and accountant, Hillel Ash, he asks, "Hillel, I think the time has come to retire and make aliyah. You're my accountant – what do you think?"

After pondering this momentous question for a moment or two, Hillel decidedly replies, "Look, you have a lot of people relying upon your support, both financial and personal. You've got grandchildren who love to come visit you. How can you leave all this behind? Work for another eight to ten years and then go. Stick around, you're needed here in Goshen."

At 79, Shmuel passes away leaving behind his wife, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. After the hespedim, Shmuel's body and his closest family members board the El Al flight to Israel for his burial place on Har HaZeitim. As the plane taxis to the runway, Shmuel's wife turns to her oldest son and says with a heavy sigh, "You know, your father always wanted to live in Israel..."

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