**13.05.24**
Hi all,

OK its 12 weeks since we originally came on Aliyah and 5 weeks since I returned after all the farewells in London. I received the most beautifully bound version of the lovely book of messages this week and we’re all looking forward to sitting down over Shabbat to read it properly. Thanks so much to those who organised it and to everyone who wrote such beautiful messages – I can’t tell you how much it all makes our hearts sing.

I understand it was 24 degrees in London on Friday, how lovely. It’s 32 degrees here but at least the mugginess of the summer hasn’t arrived yet so if you can stay in the shade its really quite pleasant.

Now that Pesach is finished, we’re starting to get to grips with some of the huge list of things we have to get sorted, part of the settling down process. Of course the list would be an awful lot shorter if it wasn’t for the fact that this is Israel. To give you some idea, imagine that you want to change a light bulb, first you have to get a form from the electric company to establish that you are OK to use their electricity but in order to get that you have to apply for a special approval in order to get the form for the electric company but before you can do that you have to go down to a special office, usually in Ramat Gan where you can get a special picture done of yourself that you’ll need to put on all those forms. When you have done all that, you can change the bulb, just in time for the next power cut!!! Shoyin! Only very slightly exaggerated in typical Neville style but it really does feel that way. We’re trying to organise Israeli driving licences at the moment and quite honestly you have to have the patience of a saint.

The exciting news is that it looks like we have found a very nice flat to rent for a year from the beginning of August. lovely as its been living with Roz’s Mum, it will be very nice to have our own place, to get our shipment over and start to feel at home. The flat has a lovely big balcony, not quite with a sea view but nearly, where a lovely cool drink or a frothy coffee awaits any visitors – so consider yourself invited and we will have 4 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms so you could even stay over too if you want.

Of course, the war continues to effect so many people here. We have Yom Hazikaron here on today – the day when we remember all of those who have fallen in wars and through terrorism. Its huge here and virtually everybody has a personal family story of losing somebody so its very powerful. Then Yom Haatzmaut and I really have no idea how they will do it this year. Normally there are fly pasts, parades and street parties, but of course this year everything will be different. How can we party when the hostages are still in captivity and our soldiers are risking their lives? You do feel very differently here – the only way I can explain it, is that here it’s an existential war where our own children, or our nephews and nieces or friends’ children are out there on the front line risking their lives to keep us safe. What we never really understood before we came is that 7th October proved so graphically what they would do to us, each and every one of us given the chance – really frightening. So when you live here, regardless of all the noise from the West, you know that defeating Hamas as far as we possibly can is the only way to try and stop them doing it again because next time G-d forbid, it might be us they will do it to.

On a much happier note, we just learnt that we have a new great niece. My mother-in-law’s 23rd great grandchild, three daughters and sons-in-law, and 21 grandchildren including their spouses. 50 family members, all but one of them living in Israel. My Father-In-Law Josef escaped the Nazis, and this is his legacy. I never cease to marvel at the way in which, after the Roman exile in the first century CE, the Jewish people gradually spread out around the world, to over 80 countries and then by a shear modern miracle so many have returned. The ingathering of the exiles and its incredible to see it for real. The little table I sit at in Shul in the mornings has two Frenchmen, one South African and me and we all pray together in one common language. For all its faults, modern day Israel truly is an incredible miracle in our own lifetime, and I am so unbelievably privileged that my family are such a part of it.

OK, so I think that’s it for now. Wishing you all a great week.

Neville

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