**3.6.24**

Hi all,

Can you believe it, today was exactly 15 weeks since we made Aliyah. Albeit that I spent 5 of them in London of course.

So let’s bring you up-to-date on at least some of our adventures as new Olim.

Roz is in London this week as its Half-Term so she is visiting Leah and catching up with friends. Apart from all the other reasons I miss her, Roz is unbelievably good at working out how to get stuff done and appointments made here….mostly with the aid of Google Translate, but she has the patience to work it out – as many of you know..not one of my greatest strengths.

So my sister-in-law who came to visit this evening from Raanana, very kindly spent 15 minutes on the phone to Maccabi setting up the latest medical appointment that I needed…and they’re open to book appointments 24 hours a day – pretty neat…if you can only understand the lingo!

Whilst not perfect, the medical system here is really very good indeed. Our GP is in a small practice and when you get to know which day s/he is in, you can usually get an appointment that week at least – and if s/he is concerned about anything, they call you! Its like the old days in the UK. First specialist appointments do have waiting lists but once you’re in with a specialist you can usually see or call them relatively quickly. And OMG they investigate everything. Test after test before they decide on a diagnosis or treatment. Its not always great and some medics here can have terrible bedside manners but the system does feel like it’s a whole lot better. And wait for this – scanners work 24/6. Roz got an appointment for a scan recently at 1.10am. They keep the scanners going apparently as its much better use of the hefty machines than turning them on and off every day, and it means that you can usually get an appointment for a scan pretty quickly as long as you don’t mind going to wherever in the middle of the night.

And getting places is my next subject. Getting around here on buses and trains is really easy. There are fantastic apps that help you plan your journey and you can almost set your watch by the punctuality of the trains. You get a Rav Kav card which is just like an oyster that of course there’s an app that you can use to top it up and you use it for all public transport. The trains all have great air conditioning so its an absolute pleasure on a hot day. I’m not saying that we wouldn’t like to get a car (Which is a whole story for another time), but the traffic here is terrible and going by train to Tel Aviv for example is quicker and far less stressful.

And then there’s Ulpan. We’ve enrolled in what’s called public ulpan which is provided by the local authority and we get it free as Olim. The problem is that they chuck everybody into the same class as they don’t want to spend more money on teachers. I don’t want to brag but both Roz and I read Hebrew, can write a little and can even speak a bit here and there. We’re in a class with folks from France, Russia and Brazil. All very nice people but the diversity of ability is huge. We are doing the most basic Aleph Bet and some of these folks are finding even that extra-ordinarily difficult. I won’t bore you with my strategy for sorting this problem but suffice to say that hopefully we’ll get transferred to a more appropriate class at least for next term.

My work is going well. I’m loving what I’m doing for Myisrael. It’s a wonderful relatively small charity that supports about 20 amazing smaller charities here doing fantastic work on the ground. In so many ways, the charity is where we were at Camp Simcha perhaps 10 or so years ago when we were getting towards a substantial size and we needed to create strong management structures. Around that time we first started to have an SLT and Myisrael needs to have something like that. Its all about change which isn’t simple at all, but it’s a lovely team with some amazing people and I’m loving being part of the team. I have another client in Israel and one in London and I’m really enjoying it. With Ulpan now three days week, I’m very busy indeed which is great for me. Roz would like me to have more time for relaxing and enjoying Israel and family but I feel the need to contribute. I can’t join up for the army TG for them, and volunteering isn’t really my thing, but if I can help charities excel hopefully that’s doing my bit.

Lastly, to tell you about an experience I had yesterday that seemed at first site to be really no big deal, but it meant the world to me. I had an appointment at the “Eye Dr”, as they call an optician here. There was a waiting room with 8 or 10 chairs, mostly occupied. A family came in with a toddler. As we all waited our turn (except the classic Israeli woman who just had to push in – there’s always at least one), this toddler worked the room. Israeli waiting rooms aren’t like British ones. People don’t sit quietly minding their own business – everyone has to get involved and everyone in this waiting room joined in with the fun and games. But it wasn’t just that – here children have a special status – they are the future and people here don’t just see such a toddler as cute, they see that he is precious and they all have that little extra sense that he is one of us and he matters as he and his peers are our future as a nation. Quite weirdly, as the people were mostly, Russian and French with a couple of Israelis, but there was a sense that through all that, we really are one family and that little toddler somehow, in my mind at least, symbolised that. For all its faults, and there truly are many, this is our country, our young people are defending it with their lives right now and everyone feels the pain of the hostage families so deeply. It isn’t easy but its great to belong!

Wishing you all Shabbat Shalom – thanks so much to those of you who reach out to me on Whatsapp from time to time, I really appreciate it so much and please, if you come to Israel, do come and visit.

PS My NEW Filofax is doing sterling service – thanks all…..

Neville &amp; Roz