Hi All,

Its really hard to believe that we just past our 7 month Aliyah anniversary.

As I sit back and reflect on all that we have achieved in that time, its quite exhausting. We now have our own flat in North Netanya that we are renting for one or two years. We have a lovely balcony overlooking the Shul (So no excuses for me) and we can see the sea. When the sun is setting its really so beautiful. We have four bedrooms so plenty of space to put guests up!!

We have a car and almost all the things one needs for relatively normal life. We’ve made lots of lovely friends here and we’re looking forward to developing those relationships. We go up to Jerusalem as often as we can to see our children and grandchildren who are growing up so fast – we are so very grateful that we’re here to see it. We picked the two boys up from school yesterday which is something many grandparents take for granted but in our situation it’s so very special to be able to do it.

My work is developing. I work with three UK charities in different ways and I’m really enjoying the variety of work and the challenges they present. I specialise in helping charities to deal with significant challenges they face. In nearly 20 years at Camp Simcha, I dealt with almost any challenge you can possibly imagine with a charity that started so small and became so large. If anyone is interest to hear more about my work do PM me and I’ll be more that happy to tell you more and if anybody knows a charity that could do with my help do please make the connection.

Many of you won’t be surprised to hear that my greatest professional challenge has been IT. My poor IT support contractor! I think we’ve just about resolved most of the issues, but different charities like to work in different ways and I have to deal with their systems – where’s Daniel when you need him!!!

Of course, I sit here as the war continues to rage both in Gaza and up north and there are some very worrying things happening on the West Bank too (Not to mention the Houthis chucking rockets that reach very near to us). Its hard to explain how our perspective has changed since we have come to live here. On the one hand, when you don’t live here you just don’t really get it. When so many of our friends and family have children who still go off all the time to the front and we regularly hear of people who live near us whose sons or daughters or grandchildren have been killed or wounded. And yet life carries on. Netanya is peaceful and as long as you stick to central Israel, you still feel pretty safe. We have a safe room but we have resisted kitting it out as some have done with emergency rations etc. The other difference is the way it makes you think. So, watching the American elections, you feel torn – Who would want to support Trump (though we have met American ex pats who certainly do) and doesn’t Harris speak incredibly well, and yet all you can really think of is which one would be better for us. I used to laugh at my family when they spoke that way and yet here I am – you just can’t help it because ultimately its an existential problem for us.

So what do I miss (Thought you would enjoy hearing my nonsense). I miss the team…really, really miss it. I miss feeling part of something so incredibly special and feeling so very proud of our accomplishments together. I miss the weather (would you believe), and more than anything, I miss familiarity. Not knowing where anything is and how to access it is hard. I miss having meetings in the garden at Amelie House and I miss CS events so terribly. I miss the wonderful families and I miss dealing with all the lovely lay people and I miss kicking myself when I make stupid inappropriate jokes – can’t do that with my clients……have to be all professional!!

On the other hand waking up every morning to bright blue sky is pretty neat, and watching the sun go down over the sea can’t be beaten – having loads of meetings in coffee shops (I love ice coffee!!). I love it when I am dealing with a regular secular person on a Friday and at the end of the conversation we both say Shabbat Shalom. I love the fact that even though we’re surrounded by millions of people who want to kill us, we’re part of over 6 million Jews together and of course most of them drive us insane – but when it really matters any one of them would stop and help me if I needed it. I’ve even learnt to push in…..sometimes!

Learning Hebrew is a very slow, difficult process (especially as I don’t have time to do proper ulpan yet), but every time I master a word or manage to respond to a taxi driver its such a feeling of accomplishment. Most of all though, I love the feeling that I’m in the Holy Land where every part of our lives is quintessentially Jewish – not necessarily religious but we are truly where we belong – where our ancestors prayed for thousands of years to return to. I really do feel such a connection with those people, and I feel so very proud and honoured that I am getting to live out their dream.

So there you have it – Neville is gradually transforming from a little Englander, into an Israeli - here you get to feel far more a part of worldwide Jewry. I’m starting slowly to realise what really does matter and what doesn’t in anything like the measures it used to.

As we approach Rosh Hashana – our first as Israeli’s can I wish you and all your families a very Sweet and Happy New Year, full of Simcha and good tidings and I really hope one way or another that we will get to see each other. You will be more than welcome to come and visit us and watch the sun go down with a cool drink sat on our balcony – what’s not to like…….see you soon!!

Neville & Roz