



“Tov acharit davar mereishito”
“The end of a thing is better than its beginning”

Kohelet 7:8

A life-changing decision at a wonderful time in our lives – RETIREMENT!

By Resa Davids

My husband and I are citizens of Israel as well as citizens of the United States. We made *Aliyah* on February 2004 and live in Israel approximately 6-8 months a year. We made this very special, life-changing decision at a wonderful time in our lives – retirement!

Retirement means change. It has given us the opportunity to do many of the things that we chose to set aside while raising our family and committing ourselves to our careers. For us, the first step in this new stage of life was a 6-month Sabbatical in Israel. We lived in a beautiful rental apartment in Jerusalem, and were incredibly happy. I studied in *Ulpan* and my husband Stan studied *Midrash, Talmud* and Hebrew language at the Hartman Institute.

When Stan was asked to consider taking on the responsibility as President of ARZA, the Association of Reform Zionists of America, I supported his candidacy. At the time I said rather casually, that the President of ARZA should really make *Aliyah*.

When the nominating committee put forth his name, I went to work. Apartments 11, 12 and 13 in the building of our Jerusalem complex were still available for sale, and I began to point out the advantages and disadvantages of each apartment. “What are you doing?” Stan asked me.

“I’m buying an apartment for us in Jerusalem. You took the position of President of ARZA, we are making *Aliyah*!” And that was it. We were on our way.

Let me tell you how we arrived at this point in our lives.

My husband served as a pulpit Rabbi from 1965-2004. I was a very active *Rebbetzen*, and also worked throughout the years as a teacher and eventually, as the Assistant Principal of the Yeshiva Atlanta High School.

In July, 1973 we volunteered to serve as tour leaders for the 6-month NFTY Eisendrath International Exchange High School Program in Israel (EIE). We were young enough to believe that the adventure would be worth the difficulties of traveling with 40 teenagers, together with our own children. We were assigned to the *Ulpan* program at the Ben Shemen Youth Village.

We fell in love with Israel, and spent a good deal of our time learning Hebrew. While Stan was busy with the program, the children and I traveled around the country and even had time to enjoy getting to know our Israeli relatives.

We considered making *Aliyah* after that first summer. However, we set aside the idea, because of the difficulties facing Reform Rabbis in Israel and because at the

time, we thought it best for our children if the family would remain in the States. Nevertheless, Israel had become the center of our Jewish identities.

Today, with 4 grandchildren in California and 3 in New York, we rent a small apartment in Santa Monica, which serves as our primary base for the months that we are in the United States. We travel frequently to New York, and thus enjoy time with all of our children and grandchildren. We look forward to sharing Israel with all of our grandchildren. Hopefully, they will come to understand and appreciate why their grandparents chose to make *Aliyah*.

Living in Israel means that we can luxuriate in the fact that we are completely at ease in our surroundings. For us it means that we are at home – physically and spiritually. We live in a neighborhood with many other

Reform rabbis living close by and enjoy walking through the streets of Jerusalem on our way to *Shabbat Services* saying, “*Shabbat Shalom*”. Stan is able to carry out his presidency through Skype, e-mail, and frequent trips to the United States.

Our Reform identity, even in Jerusalem with its large *Haredi* (ultra Orthodox) population, finds frequent, positive expression. We enjoy having a unique relationship with Hebrew Union College students, tomorrow’s leaders of the Reform Movement, watching their own personal progressions, as they struggle to determine the role of Israel in their own Jewish identities.

We feel that by actually living here we can effectively contribute to the shaping of Israel as a pluralistic, democratic, liberal Jewish State.



Retiring to Israel, 2004.



Resa and granddaughter Mya, Jerusalem

Resa S. Davids received her BS in Mathematics from Tufts University and her MS in Biostatistics from the University of Cincinnati. She served as a teacher and as an Assistant Principal of Yeshiva Atlanta High School. She is very active in the Jewish community as a national board member of ARZA (Association of Reform Zionists of America) and the WRJ (Women of Reform Judaism).

Resa and Rabbi Stanley Davids currently reside in Jerusalem and Santa Monica, California. They are blessed with three children and seven grandchildren.

Discussion questions:

- “*Tov acharit davar me’reishito*” is generally translated to mean that the end is better than the beginning. The “*me*” in *me’reishito* might not be translated as “than” but, rather, as “from” or “as a result of.” This literally means, the end of something is successful because of the beginning. What do you think about the idea of making *Aliyah* at the retirement stage of one’s life? How does this mesh with the different ideas of “*Tov acharit davar me’reishito*”?
- Most Americans thinking about retirement imagine moving to Florida or Arizona. How would that experience be different from that of Stanley and Resa’s retirement in Israel?
- Resa and Stanley Davids represent a new flexible model of *Aliyah*, in which they spend 6-8 months a year in Israel and the rest of the year in the States. What do you think about this model of *Aliyah*? What would be the advantages of this model? What might be the disadvantages?