



Strangers at Home: The Challenges of Aliyah

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Goals:

The Chanichim will have an open and honest conversation about the challenges of Aliyah which gives a different aspect on Aliyah. Chanichim will recognize that although Aliyah is a dream for some, that in practice, it has incredible challenges, from glory to guts- the reality of being a newcomer to Israel. In this activity, chanichim will understand some of the real challenges of the Olim and how they deal with it.

Duration: 60-90 min

Introduction/hook: When we see a movie/poster/commercial about Aliyah. (If there is time we can see this movie: <http://inspire.nbn.org.il/multimedia/aliyah-videos.html>) What kind of feeling does it give us?

Introduce Idea: The Challenges of Aliyah

Usually, Aliyah is presented to us as the fulfillment of a dream, the embodiment of Zionism, as a Jewish triumph, as something all Jews should aspire to. Is this vision of Aliyah as wonderful, warm, special and triumphant reality though? Obtaining the passport is exciting...but then what?

[depending on age of group, compare it to college- it's exciting, you can't wait for it and then...reality hits. No one is going to do your laundry for you, you were put in the wrong History class, your tuition payment didn't go through, your roommate is weird, etc.)

Today we will see if Aliyah is really so much a dream, if Israel really is a land of "milk and honey," dreamlike and utopian, or if Aliyah, like any choice in life, comes with challenges we may not consider.

Body of activity:

1. Lech Lecha – Hand out the Lecha Lecha Psukim.
2. Explain that God is asking something huge of Abram- 3 specific things of which he is to abandon. Ask them to sit with a partner and figure out the three requests God is asking of Abraham in instructing him to leave. How will we interpret these 3 aspects in this situation with Abram and on our own terms [m'artzecha, m'moladetcha, mi beit avicha]

After each pair has time to discuss this, we bring it to the circle and share our thoughts from the work in pairs.



Ideas to share:

"Meartzecha" - מְאֵרְצָךְ - the physical aspect: the job, the home, the school

"Mimoladetchach" - מִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ - the cultural aspect: the language, the community, the American culture, missing Sundays, the politeness, the way we do things in America.

"Mibeit Avichah" - וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ - the personal aspect: family, friends

After we understand the three aspects of challenges, discuss which is the most difficult one, or which one is the one that would hold the chanichim back from making Aliyah. Or, if any of them know someone who has made/is making Aliyah, how is he or she is dealing with it through these three aspects.

Examples: Employment – some olim struggle to find work in Israel. Other olim have managed to continue their American work from Israel.

School and language – Olim struggle with the “mimoladetecha” component of cultural differences and language barriers. Some Olim choose to go to an American school in Israel like IDC in Herzliya.

The family – Mibeit Avichah- It would be difficult for anyone to be so far from their family and friends. Today, we have Skype, Vonage phone (local American phone numbers in Israel), online photos, Facebook.

Challenges of Aliyah Part 1- Recognizing Different Challenges, coming up with solutions

Explain that we can see through this text and the examples we connected to it, that Aliyah has its challenges. Aliyah, although a dream fulfilled for some, can become nightmarish in reality. However, there are always ways to overcome obstacles given any challenging situation. We're going to explore this today- the reality of Aliyah and how to meet its challenges.

Activity: Play Therapist.

A new Oleh comes to you with these types of issues. Imagine you are a therapist or social worker helping new olim adjust. Use of the problems we've discussed and come up with advice you would give to an oleh facing this issue.

This teaches them that although there are struggles and challenges, there are people there to support you and solutions you can apply to your situation.

As “therapists,” we can help address the challenges that one faces with Aliyah but coming up with our own solutions.

Other concerns to mention:

What would you recommend to someone that really suffers from the hot weather in Israel?

What would you recommend to someone who is a speech therapist and wants to make Aliyah?



What would you recommend to someone in a nice way, that is afraid of the Israeli rude attitude?

Other questions:

When is Aliyah easier? When you are single or with a family? Before school or after you have a degree? When was it easier in the past like in the 70's or now in the 21st century with all the technology?

Challenges of Aliyah Part 2

Stereotypes

Option 1: Israel - Israelis

Divide the group into 2. Each small group gets a word. One get the word ISRAEL and the other group get the word ISRAELIS. Each small group has to write a list of associations connected to their word [if Shabbat, each participant can remember their one word and present it]. The idea is that the group that had the word *Israel* will write nice things and the group that had the word *ISRAELIS* will come up with common stereotypes of the Israeli people such as rude, pushy and aggressive. We will open it up and ask why is there such a difference between the land or the country and the people.

Option 2: Israeli - American

Divide the group into 2. Each small group gets a word. One get the word ISRAELI and the other group get the word AMERICAN. Each small group has to write [Shabbat: each person chooses one word to remember] a list of associations to their word. The idea is that the group that had the word ISRAELI will write rude, pushy and more and the group that will have the word AMERICAN will write JAP, polite and other stereotypes of North American Jews. Later we will open it up and ask why is there such a difference between Israelis and Americans and what happens to one that makes Aliyah?

OPTIONAL: Use the Israel-American Stereotypes as a handout for discussion

Option 3: Role play - In this part of the activity we want the group to have fun, to act, to go to the extreme with their stereotypes so we can latter have a discussion.

Scenarios depict different scenes from daily life in Israel

- An American standing in line at the post office and other people are passing before her.
- An American trying to buy food but instead of the right word, she says something embarrassing.
- An American is having a one-on-one private conversation and an Israeli sitting nearby interrupts to give his/her 2 cents.



- An Israeli man is making comments toward an American woman that would be considered sexual harassment in North America, but in Israel, Israeli women just ignore it.
- The cab driver overcharges you because he hears the American accent and thinks that all Americans are rich and don't understand Hebrew.

Option 4 Song Study: Rak Po

Shabbat:

Hand out lyrics and explain that they can find it on Youtube.

Weekday: Hand out the lyrics and listen to the music:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikjiMbJIG8g>

Open for discussion using the Makom guide (attached)

Discussion

Your discussion (or reflection) will depend on which option you chose.

Example: Role plays

- Why is there such a difference between Americans and Israelis?
- Where do these stereotypes come from?
- Why are the differences between Americans and Israelis such a challenge for new Olim?
- How can we better understand each other in order for American Olim to integrate into Israeli society?
- What can new olim do to prepare themselves to integrate into American society, given the stereotypes?

Sikkum:

Today, we looked at the challenges one faces when making Aliyah. Aliyah in theory is utopian, it is a "hope" (Tikvah) to live freely in one's homeland. But we learned that sometimes, the fulfillment of that dream, can come with some nightmarish situations.

How does one who wants to make Aliyah overcome these challenges? Is it easier now in a global world or is it harder? Do you think that all Olim from all counties have the same challenges?

How can we, as North Americans, and Israelis, as those who welcome new Olim, better prepare new Olim to handle these situations? What are some solutions to meeting and overcoming these challenges so that Aliyah can be a more positive and enticing option?

Final Thoughts: Life in Israel is very challenging. To quote one Oleh: "More than I made Aliyah to the Jewish state, I made Aliyah to the Middle East." There are oftentimes more than one bargains for when making Aliyah. We see the promotional videos encouraging Aliyah, making it



seem dream-like, but these rarely paint the picture of reality after one lands at Ben Gurion Airport. When real life starts, the real challenges begin.

Optional: You can finish with a quote: a lovely letter from one who made Aliyah in the summer of 2009

<http://linktoisrael.org/link/meet-rabbi-miriam-berkowitz.html>

Bring it home/making it personal: After seeing these challenges, are these challenges that you would like to take in your personal life?! How would you personally respond to some of the challenges we discussed today? Could you overcome them given that you were part of coming up with solutions for the challenges we presented?

Attachments:

Lech Lecha texts

Rak Po - Makom program

Israeli- American stereotypes

Strangers at Home: The Challenges of Aliyah
Lech Lecha Text
B'reisheet 12:1-4

א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ
מֵאֶרֶץְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ,
אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֲרַאֲךָ.

1 Now the LORD said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto the land that I will show you.'

ב וְאֶעֱשֶׂךָ, לְגוֹי גָדוֹל, וְאַבְרָכְךָ,
וְאֶגְדַּלְהָ שְׁמֶךָ; וְהָיָה, בְּרָכָה.

2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and be you a blessing.

ג וְאַבְרָכָה, מְבָרְכֶיךָ, וּמְקַלְלֶיךָ,
אָאֵר; וְנִבְרָכוּ בְּךָ, כָּל מִשְׁפַּחֹת
הָאֲדָמָה.

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'

ד וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם, כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי
יְהוָה, וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ, לוֹט; וְאַבְרָם, בֶּן-
חֲמִישׁ שָׁנִים וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה, בָּצִיאָתוֹ,
מִחָרָן.

4 So Abram went, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him; and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

Rak Po – Only here רק פה HaDag Nachash

I see some Japanese
shopping at the kiosk across
the way
What fun for people that for
them,
here is 'overseas'
Basically, Israel is okay on
the face of it
In New York there are
millions going without food

But I've got this itch to get
away from this place
detach, clean out, space out
At least for a while, to hang
out

And finally put behind me the
doubts about my country

Because only here
"unpleasant" has no meaning
Because only here
Power is less important than
its spoils
Only here
3 Prime Ministers are under
investigation
And aren't cooperating!

Only here
I feel I belong
Although I'm angry about the
corruption
"And if you find yourself
abroad and hear of an
explosion?"
So I suddenly long to be
Only Here

I only get to smoke local stuff
here
When in a coffee shop in
Amsterdam
it's international

*Ro'im yapanim konim
bakiyosk mimul
Eyzeh kef le'anashim
shebishvilam poh zeh
chul
Al panav yisrael beseder
begadol
B'new york yesh milyonim
she'eyn lahem ma
le'echol*

*Aval medagdeg li
lehitrachek
Mihamakom hazeh
lehitnatek lehitnakot
lehit'ofef lefachot litkufa
lehitchafef*

*Ulasim sofit me'achoray
et halevatim hanogim
la'erezt megoray
Ki rak po eyn mashma'ut
l'lo na'im*

*Rak po shilton pachot
chashuv miman'amim
Rak po shloscha rashey
memshala nechkarim
velo meshatfim pe'ula*

*Rak po ani margish
shayachut lamrot she'ani
ko'ess al hashchitut
"ve'im ata b'chul nimitza
v'al pitzutz shomeya?"
az rak lepo pitom ani
mitga'ageya*

*nish'ar li la'ashen rak
chomer makomi
b'coffee shop
b'Amsterdam zeh ben
le'umi*

רואה יפנים קונים בקיוסק
ממול
איזה כיף לאנשים שבשבילם
פה זה חו"ל
על פניו ישראל בסדר בגדול
בניו יורק יש מיליונים שאין
להם מה לאכול.

אבל מדגדג לי להתרחק
מהמקום הזה להתנתק
להתנתקות להתעופף
לפחות לתקופה להתחפף

ולשים סופית מאחורי
את הלבטים הנוגעים לארץ
מגורי.
כי רק פה אין משמעות ללא
נעים.

רק פה שלטון פחות חשוב
ממנעמים.
רק פה שלושה ראשי
ממשלה נחקרים
ולא משתפים פעולה.

רק פה אני מרגיש שייכות
למרות שאני כועס על
השחיתות
"ואם אתה בחו"ל נמצא ועל
פיצוץ שומע?"
אז רק לפה פתאום
אני מתגעגע.

נשאר לי לעשן רק חומר
מקומי
בקופי שופ באמסטרדם זה
בין-לאומי

Look at my faded jeans with
pride
And wonder about the blues
in a
bar in New Orleans
Think about the Riviera when
I go past Achzivⁱⁱ
Boat like in Venice in the
Winter
in South Tel Avivⁱⁱⁱ

Because only here
The pay comes in 4 months
late
Because only here
Everyone wants to be a shark
Because only here
When you pass a place of
business you relax when you
see a guy with a gun^{iv}

Only here
I feel I belong
Although I'm angry about the
corruption
"And if you find yourself
abroad and hear of an
explosion?"
So I suddenly long to be
Only Here

With me it's all
a matter of habit
All in all it's cool to hang out
in Israel
With me it's all about what
I'm into
To be part of the village or
part of the global
We talk in Hebrew
And swear in Russian, Arabic,
and English
Because only here
We queue up to exchange
blows
Because only here
we're in the army and all
want exemptions

*mistakel mapsut
bashifshuf shebajehans
meharherr b'blues b'bar
b'New Orleans
choshev al haRiviera
keshe'ani overr liyad
achziv
maflig kmo b'Venetziya
bachoref b'drom Tel Aviv*

*Ki rak po yesh shutaf plus
tish'im
Rak po kulam rotzim
lihiyot krishim
Rak po kshe ata overr
liyad bet esek ata nirga
im ata ro'eh eyzeh rula im
neshek*

*Rak po ani margish
shayachut lamrot she'ani
ko'ess al hashchitut
"ve'im ata b'chul nimtza
v'al pitzutz shomeya?"
az rak lepo pitom ani
mitga'ageya*

*Hakol etzli inyan shel
herringel
Sach hakol sababa
lehitgalgel b'yisrael
Hakol etzli inyan shel ma
ba li
Chelek mihakfar oh
chelek mihaglobali
Ki rak po kulam
medabrim Ivrit umkalelim
b'Russit, Anglit, ve'Aravit
Rak po anashim holchim
makot bator
Rak po kulam batzava
verotzim ptor*

מסתכל מפסוט בשיפשוף
שבג'ינס
מהרהר בבלוז בבר בניו
אורלינס
חושב על הריביארה כשאני
עובר ליד עכזיב
מפליג כמו בונציה בחורף
בדרום תל אביב

כי רק פה יש שותף +
תשעים
רק פה כולם רוצים להיות
כרישים
רק פה כשאתה עובר ליד
בית עסק אתה נרגע עם
אתה רואה איזה רולה עם
נשק

רק פה אני מרגיש שייכות
למרות שאני כועס על
השחיתות
"ואם אתה בחו"ל נמצא ועל
פיצוץ שומע?"
אז רק לפה פתאום
אני מתגעגע.

הכול אצלי עניין של הרגל
סך הכול סבבה להתגלגל
בישראל.
הכל אצלי עניין של מה בא לי
חלק מהכפר או חלק
מהגלובלי.
כי רק פה כולם מדברים
בעברית
ומקללים ברוסית, אנגלית
וערבית.
רק פה אנשים הולכים מכות
בתור.
רק פה כולם בצבא ורוצים
פטור.

Only here
I feel I belong
Although I'm angry about the
corruption
"And if you find yourself
abroad and hear of an
explosion?"
So I suddenly long to be
Only Here

Only here
The positive with the
negative
Only here everything's
familiar
feels like mine

Only here I feel comfortable
That's the conclusion
So what's the point of
running away all over the
cosmos?

Only here
I feel I belong
Although I'm angry about the
corruption
"And if you find yourself
abroad and hear of an
explosion?"
I realise where I came from
And go into shock...

*Rak po ani margish
shayachut lamrot she'ani
ko'ess al hashchitut
"ve'im ata b'chul nimtza
v'al pitzutz shomeya?"
az rak lepo pitom ani
mitga'ageya*

*Rak po bachiyuvi ubashlili
Rak po hakol mukar
margish sheli*

*Rak po li no'ach zeh
hasikum
Az lama li livro'ach lechol
makom bayikum?*

*Rak po ani margish
shayachut lamrot she'ani
ko'ess al hashchitut
"ve'im ata b'chul nimtza
v'al pitzutz shomeya?"
Ani kolet me'eyfo bati
umizda'azeya*

רק פה אני מרגיש שייכות
למרות שאני כועס על
השחיתות
"ואם אתה בחו"ל נמצא ועל
פיצוץ שומע?"
אז רק לפה פתאום
אני מתגעגע.

רק פה בחיובי ובשלילי.
רק פה הכול מוכר מרגיש
שלי.

רק פה לי נוח זה הסיכום
אז למה לי לברוח לכל מקום
ביקום?

רק פה אני מרגיש שייכות
למרות שאני כועס על
השחיתות
"ואם אתה בחו"ל נמצא ועל
פיצוץ שומע?"
אז קולט מאיפה באתי
ומזדעזע

Only Here – *Rak Po* – רק פה HaDag Nachash

Pshat

Work through the song, clarifying language and understanding. Is there anything that we don't understand? Make use of the footnotes to clarify certain references

Drash

- Is the singer angry, or laughing, or both? Is the song full of love, or longing, or loathing, or what?
- It seems the singer goes through a process during the song. At first he is angry, but finally accepting. Is 'everything is familiar' a good enough reason to live in Israel?
- 'When you hear of a terror explosion – I long for only here' Is this a negative approach to belonging?
- Is this a patriotic song? Can you be supportive and critical at the same time?

Sod

- Where do you feel like you belong?
- What are you angry about?
- Is anger a mark of belonging? Or must a feeling of belonging always mean that everything is perfect?
- Write your own list of 'Only Here'. About your family. About your community. About the US. About Israel.

ⁱ Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak are being investigated for election funding irregularities. Ariel Sharon was fined for election funding irregularities, and is now being investigated for illegally acquiring money to pay off the fine!

ⁱⁱ Achziv is a seaside resort in the North of Israel

ⁱⁱⁱ There is often flooding in South Tel Aviv slums during the Winter rains

^{iv} A security guard...

American-Israeli

Cross-Cultural Reference Guide

Israelis

Israelis tend to see themselves as:

Informal
Outspoken, direct, honest
Spontaneous, open, natural
Hospitable, warm
Assertive
Flexible about plans and schedules; casual about rules and regulations
Creative, able to improvise
Active, taking initiative
Self-confident
Willing to take risks
Wary, alert, realistic

Americans often see Israelis as:

Rude, familiar, inconsiderate, disrespectful, insubordinate, unprofessional
Tactless, rude, blunt, disrespectful, aggressive, stubborn, insubordinate
Out of control, intrusive, ill-mannered, unprofessional
Smothering, intrusive, dominating
Aggressive, arrogant, ruthless, stubborn
Inefficient, sloppy, unprofessional, undisciplined, arrogant, irresponsible, inconsiderate
Superficial, chaotic, undisciplined, unsystematic
Insubordinate, pushy, undisciplined, intrusive, dominating, aggressive
Arrogant
Irresponsible, overconfident
Cynical, distrustful

Americans:

Americans tend to see themselves as:

Polite
Friendly
Respectful of privacy (theirs and yours)
Sharing personal concerns
Organized
Respectful of authority
Professional
Efficient
Trusting and trustworthy

Israelis often see Americans as:

Insincere, artificial, lacking spontaneity, excessively formal
Naive, superficial, sexually provocative, artificial
Distant, unfriendly, lacking spontaneity, shy, excessively formal
Tastelessly exposing private matters, unnecessarily revealing, intrusive
Rigid, "square," inflexible, efficient at the expense of personal relationships, going by the book instead of improvising, focused on procedures instead of the task at hand
Passive, conforming, excessively formal, excessively mindful of hierarchy, focused on roles rather than goals, *fryer* (Hebrew slang for "sucker," or "pushover")
Arbitrarily differentiating between work and social spheres, excessively formal
Arbitrarily differentiating between work and social spheres, unfriendly, overly programmed, lacking spontaneity
Naive