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Children gather for lessons beside the shattered remains of a kibbutz school as Israel reacts to peace.

Odyssey to Israel—

Life Goes on in the Debris

By **Bernard Shuman**

The Bernard Shuman family, formerly of Sioux City, Ia., emigrated to Israel 20 months ago. Since then, the Magazine of the Midlands has carried a series of articles about their absorption into the Israeli way of life, and the hardships of the Yom Kippur War.

Jerusalem, Israel.

The soldiers we see and don't see are our daily reminders that there has been another senseless war among neighbors in the Middle East. There never can be replacements for those who have fallen in battle; they are the ones out of vision but not

out of mind. The men and women in uniform, "tramping" about the cities and countryside between their military posts and their homes, are the ones in view, emphasizing the need to keep the reserves mobilized in these uncertain times, despite the accord with Egypt.

Life goes on in the debris of the Yom Kippur War, and although these daily reminders exist, we do our best to live as normal a life as possible in Israel. Admittedly it isn't easy. Still we go to work and we attend school, we socialize informally and we attend concerts and lectures, we watch television and listen to the radio, we shop, and we pray.

There is an Israel Ministry of Absorption poster which uses a tongue-in-cheek approach to encouraging Jewish people from other lands to immigrate. The decorative poster, copies of which are wall decor in the children's bedrooms, declares, "We Never Promised You a Rose Garden," based on a popular novel and song of several years ago.

In these critical times, one must envision Israel as a "rose garden." The fragrant, colorful flowers are there behind the thorns and weeds of high costs, fuel shortages and economic instability. The successful gardener is the Jew with the green thumb who wants to live a Jewish life in the Jewish homeland.

Our family, former residents of Sioux City, Ia., has been living in Israel more than 20 months. We were travelling a fairly smooth road of

Aliyah (immigration), when the Yom Kippur War erupted, jolting us and everybody else. It is now imperative to see and smell the roses.

Increased costs are everywhere, most evident when shopping for food. Eating habits have changed considerably, as we agree with the vegetarian-to-be housewife who exclaimed, "Meat prices are absurd!"

We shop for dairy products and the basics primarily at Supersol, located within walking distance of our Ramat Danya apartment. My wife, Marion, prefers buying fresh fruits and vegetables at the friendly green grocer near the Israel Fiber Institute where she works.

Occasionally, we become part of the bargain-hunting congestion in the Mahane Yehuda open-air market. In other words, food is ample, with the exception of eggs.

The scarcity of eggs is timely and, hopefully, temporary. The major reasons for the shortage are a cold weather seasonal lay-off by the chickens and the servings sent to the soldiers. Eggs are rationed, six to a customer, when the stores receive a supply. Other eggs find their way to the "black market," where there is no quibbling over paying twice the normal price. It is unbelievable how a "flat" of eggs (a tray of 30) can make a household so happy. Marion has solved part of the problem by discovering tasty egg-less recipes.

Meat-less days, egg-less days, and also car-less days!

Continued



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Continued.

I don't drive on Wednesdays, the day I selected because of its comfortable middle-of-the-week location. There is a brown sticker with the letter "dale," the fourth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, affixed to my windshield, which means I'm subject to a stiff fine if my vehicle moves on Wednesdays.

This is Israel's form of gasoline rationing, and it is very tolerable. Add to it the price of gas, more than \$1 a gallon at present with another price increase inevitable, and there is sufficient reason to leave the car at home and travel by public transportation.

I do not write about the car-less day or the high costs of living with any intention of arousing sympathy. I am fully aware that a fuel shortage exists in the United States, that the inflation bug has infected the entire country. Visitors from the States and the news magazines offer ready insight into our mutual problems.

The movement to conserve fuel has resulted in car pools and more people "tramping" (hitch-hiking) and using the buses. Denmark High School, where Debby and Judy are students, has set back the beginning of classes for 15 minutes in an effort to ease the 8 a.m. traffic jams.

Because many bus drivers are still in uniform and many buses are also mobilized, the service is not as frequent as it was before Yom Kippur. Elbowing one's way into a packed bus is standard procedure.

Incidentally, Judy's favorite teacher, Amnon, is still in uniform. He writes letters to the class, with special messages of encouragement for each student. He returned briefly to Jerusalem recently, stopping to say "Shalom" at a class party.

Ellis travels the greatest distance by bus to reach the Jerusalem High School, a three-year-old school located in the picturesque Lifta area. Through the cooperation of Mayor Teddy Kollek, a large 10-room house with surrounding buildings forms this educational complex. Approximately half of the student body of 100 are the children of "olim" (immigrants); the others are native Israelis.

A recent writing assignment for my son introduced him to the complexities of the Israeli election system, and the article he wrote about the election was published in "Contact," the Jerusalem youth magazine published under the sponsorship of the Board of Jewish Education of New York. The family writing competition is most welcome!

The national election is now history, but its close link with the war and the cease-fire, cause and effect, dominated the news media and general conversations before the actual voting took place.

It was accurately scheduled on radio and television and in the newspapers as "election propaganda." We have now reached that stage "after the election," when life in Israel is supposed to get better.

All of Jerusalem's school children, including our three, paid their respects to David Ben-Gurion, Israel's

first Prime Minister and the architect of the country. The American Jewish community was represented at the funeral by Jack Stein, president of the President's Council of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Marion and I first met Stein when we represented Sioux City's Shaare Zion Synagogue at a conservative Judaism synagogue convention in Minneapolis. Stein addressed a Sabbath morning service at the World Council of Synagogues, at which time he commended the American Jewish community, as well as President Nixon, for responding to Israel's urgent needs in war-time.

The Shumans have become fairly active in this newly-organized synagogue, which, because of the center-of-the-city location, serves a dual capacity, accommodating tourists visiting Jerusalem as well as olim living in the Holy City who want a religious service reminiscent of services attended in the U.S. We use the identical prayer book that we used at Shaare Zion.

The chapter of the United Synagogue Youth is being activated, with Ellis, Debby and Judy participants when possible in the Monday afternoon and evening meetings.

Rabbi H. R. Rabinowitz, the rabbi emeritus of Sioux City's Shaare Zion, and Mrs. Rabinowitz recently returned from a visit to the U.S. to their home in Jerusalem. They found on their return that "what hurts most is that the laughter, gaiety and cheerfulness of Jerusalem isn't here; instead, there is anxiety, worry and bitterness."

Although this mood is understandable, it necessitates a Herculean effort on the part of each one of us to restore normalcy to our daily lives.

And so, Marion and I attend concerts, enjoying with capacity audiences the beautiful music of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and the Israel Broadcasting Symphony. A soloist with the symphony is the Russian violinist who lived with his family on the floor above us in the Absorption Center when we first came to Israel.

And so, each member of the family becomes intrigued by the twists-and-turns of the mystery movies ("Colombo," "McMillan and Wife," etc.) which are shown nightly on Jordan television. Listening to the English news on this channel is a revelation on how current events can be slanted.

And so, the children play table tennis in the building's air raid shelter which is now utilized as a recreation room for the young.

And so, Marion and I enjoy coffee and cake with friends in a neighboring apartment on a Friday evening, our conversation touching upon this-and-that subject, an over-all look at life in Israel.

The Jerusalem Post recently described some of the letters that Premier Golda Meir has received since the outbreak of fighting. One of the letters quoted came from 14-year-old John Pirnot of Omaha, in which he wrote:

"It is difficult for someone as young as myself to understand why one nation of people should have to struggle against all odds to maintain the right to live freely in their own country, but I know, Madame Premier, that it has been that way for hundreds of years now. There is no other people in history to be tried as the people of Israel have been tried.

"I don't know how you people keep maintaining your courage and your pride, but it is a marvelous thing for the young people of the world to see. I am Christian by faith, but that has nothing to do with whether I side or do not side with the people of Israel.

"I don't know enough about the politics of war yet to know what is really just or who is really at fault, but I do know enough to say that the people of Israel have suffered enough and fought enough and have risen up enough to be declared a nation of people that deserve to live in their own land with the dignity that they have earned."

There is not much that we can add to this highly sensitive letter, except that Hebrew word that means peace. "Shalom!"



John Pirnot of Millard Central Junior High wrote a letter to Premier Golda Meir.