

the REAL REASON for ALIYAH!

The author has made periodic reports on his family's immigration from Sioux City, Ia., to Israel in the past 18 months. Last November 18 we carried his story of the Yom Kippur War. This is his followup report.

By Bernard Shuman

Living amidst the crisis of war is an appropriate time to make an assessment of one's aliyah to Israel. This is what it is all about!

Thrust into the background are all of a new immigrant's frustrations and complaints about trying to be successfully absorbed into the Israeli way of life. Today this commentary is of little significance, although in all probability it will emerge into the forefront again when the smoke of battle no longer pollutes the environment. Aliyah is critical to Israel's tomorrows.

Today, however, it doesn't matter that the immigrant from the West is perturbed by the "cultural shock" that he finds in Israel. Of course, the immigrant encounters unnecessary bureaucracy. Admittedly, there are problems with high costs, inadequate housing, unsatisfactory education and a difficult-to-learn language. So what?

What really matters is that Israel has fought once again for its very life. The Jewish people have been engaged in their fifth do-or-die struggle to live in their homeland. Here, then, quite vividly is the reason you came to Israel and the reason you are staying -to be part of the Jewish way of life that will persist. This is what it is all about!

There is a dream that envisions the Middle East as a harmonious community, in which each Israeli and Arab man, woman and child is a friend, not an enemy.

The cease-fire has terminated the bitter, bloody fighting of the Yom Kippur War, and action has shifted to confrontations at the diplomatic table.

The lights have been turned on again in Israel. The total blackout that lasted approximately three weeks is nothing more than a recollection, and, in retrospect, it really wasn't a strain. Viewing the shining moon and the twinkling stars without the clash of man-made lights was an exhilarating experience.

The Bernard Shuman family, formerly of Sioux City, Iowa, found other merits to the blackout in Jerusalem. The five of us—my wife, Marion, the three teen-agers in the family, Ellis, Debby and Judy, and myself—remained at home as a closely-knit family unit, watching television, listening to the news broadcasts on the radio, reading, playing games and merely visiting together. It was very nice.

The inconvenience involved in venturing outside at night among all the families living in our apartment

building also resulted in the establishment of closer relationships among these families. Informal gatherings over coffee and cake, with the war naturally the principal topic of discussion, were very frequent.

I don't mean to imply that life came to a standstill at night. It didn't. Certain around-the-clock activities are essential, such as the care of the sick and wounded at hospitals, the preparation of dairy products at the dairy, the baking of bread at the bakeries and the processing of documents and other essential papers at various offices. There were cars on the street; albeit they proceeded cautiously, within the range of their colored headlights.

The greatest role the volunteer could play on the home front was to make his car available for transporting workers to and from work, bringing supplies to stores, delivering telegrams and essential messages to various governmental offices, and taking the families of wounded soldiers to the hospitals to see them.

The public bus transportation system didn't function during the hours of the blackout. In addition, the number of buses operating during the day was greatly depleted because many were mobilized as troop transports.

Volunteers Dave F. and Bernie C. in our building, both owners of camper vehicles, were assigned to Army units stationed near the Dead Sea in the Jordan Valley. (Israel kept a close watch on a possible third front.) They took the soldiers wherever necessary and also brought them supplies from Jerusalem, such as

food and clothing and reading material. They even brought the soldiers into the city for brief, joyful reunions with their families, a more nourishing meal, a hot shower and a change of clothes.

There were so many volunteers available that the joke circulated that a volunteer needed "proteksia" (pull) to find something to do.

Before regular school hours resumed, many high school students, including Ellis and several of his Jerusalem High School classmates, worked at the Post Office, sorting and delivering the mail. Mail service has never been more efficient. The teen-agers sometimes delivered mail to a neighborhood three times a day.

Coincidentally, the Shumans finally received mail from family and friends in the United States, ending a three-week drouth on mail from overseas. The mail also reinforced the news media accounts concerning the tremendous response American Jewry has made to Israel's needs.

Since the outbreak of hostilities, I have been actively engaged in what I humorously, with a slight touch of shame, describe as "the paper war." The dissemination throughout the world of highly informative material about Israel and the controversial issues separating the Jewish and Arab peoples has been the principal task of the office where I work at Hebrew University. The staff members were repeatedly advised that what we were doing was essential to the cause, striving to motivate active support for Israel among free-thinking and peace-loving men and women around the globe. We kept this objective in mind as we diligently wrote countless letters and brochures.

The normal purpose of the office at the university is to provide resource material for fund-raising by Friends of Hebrew University organizations. However, the war has curtailed all individual fund-raising campaigns, with the entire country united in one drive to raise funds benefitting all of Israel. The war has delayed the regular opening of the academic year because the majority of students and

faculty are in uniform.

Although the Shuman family did not have any close relative in action, we were deeply concerned throughout the three-week period for the safety of sons and relatives of friends and acquaintances. In truth, Israel mourns each death. Each loss of life is so unnecessary, and each casualty touches us.

The husband of one of Ellis' teachers was killed in the Golan. The son of a family in the building adjacent to ours in Ramat Danya isn't returning. Nor is the son of a former Seattle, Wash., family, who had already sacrificed one son in the War of Attrition.

Debby and Judy and their classmates at Denmark High School have sent packages and letters to the soldiers. Debby wrote one in English, and the answer from Ehud came in English. He wrote:

"I received your lovely letter just now. It's great to know that everything's fine in Jerusalem. I'm also from Jerusalem, and hope to be back home soon, although it seems the war will last at least one more week. However, our morale here in the Syrian front is very high. We will smash them this time so that they won't have any possibility but to agree to establish peace. Thanks a lot for your letter."

We have lived a lifetime in the past three weeks. Although the threat of war has been a dark cloud hanging over the Middle East ever since the establishment of the State of Israel 25 years ago, war was remote in our thinking when we made aliyah to Israel in May, 1972. Despite the absence at that time of true peace, Israel was prospering and we felt an emotional satisfaction in being among one's own people.

The Yom Kippur War has been a setback, and it's a long, long road the Jewish people must travel to a full recovery. If the cease-fire holds, and the diplomats can begin sincere and honest discussions around the table, the Shuman family is among the residents of Israel anxious to begin the journey.



A United Nations truce officer stands between Israeli and Egyptian forces, a symbol of the shaky peace in the Mideast.