

Hello!



A view of the moshav



Together with two of my brothers



Yehudia, a nature reserve in the Golan Heights, where we go hiking every summer



Getting a brachah from Rav Ishee, *shlita*

MEET BETZALEL HAZEN, AGE 10.5 FROM MOSHAV MATITYAHU, ISRAEL

by Bassi Gruen



Hi Betzael, have you been living on Moshav Matityahu your entire life?

I moved here from Providence, Rhode Island, when I was three weeks old, so it's just about my whole life. I'm the second of six - five boys and one girl. The younger four kids were all born here.

How did your parents choose the moshav as their home? What is a moshav, for that matter?

A moshav was originally a place where people used to work together to plant produce, and then share the profits. Today, many moshavim are simply quiet, rural villages, what Americans would call "country." When my parents first arrived in Eretz Yisrael, they heard about this wonderful community on the moshav. They came for a Shabbos, and decided that this is where they wanted to live.

Can you tell us a bit about life on the moshav?

Almost sixty families live on our moshav. We each have our own house, rather than live in apartment buildings like most people do in Israel. Some families have pets - one has sheep, one has ducks, and several families have dogs. It's quiet here, and there is lots of space. We're just a few minutes walk from Kiryat Sefer, and we go there for shopping and for taking buses to the big cities. Some kids want to live in the city, because they think what they don't have is better, but I know the moshav is good for me.

That's a great attitude. Who is the *rav* of the moshav?*

Rav Leff is the *rav*. He gives *drashos* on Shabbos, and sometimes he speaks especially to the boys. He's a nice *rav* - he doesn't just tell people what they can't do. Everyone on the moshav is close to him.

Does any farming still take place on the moshav?

The moshav owns a vineyard. Every year, before Pesach, each family gets several bottles of wine and grape juice. Other than that, there is no official farming, but many people have fruit trees in their gardens.

Do you go to school on the moshav?

No, I go to school in Chashmonaim, a *yishuv* (something like a village) several minutes away by car. There are twenty-five boys in my class. We learn from eight-thirty till two o'clock, and one day a week we end at four.

Are most of your friends from school?

Actually no, my friends are mainly the moshav boys. Everyone is close - even though I'm not yet eleven, I can be friends with a fourteen-year-old. That's



how it is on the moshav. On Friday and *motzaei Shabbos* we all play baseball or basketball. During the week we ride our bikes. The path around the moshav is 1.5 kilometers (almost one mile), and we often bike it. On Shabbos, we may play hide and seek, or take walks. There's a nice feeling between all the boys, almost no fighting.

Your English is excellent; does everyone on the moshav speak English?

Almost everyone on the moshav can speak English, just not everyone does. At home and with friends I speak both, although in school I mainly speak Hebrew. There are some words I only know in one of the two languages, and sometimes in school I can't remember a basic word in Hebrew. Then, I have to go to an English-speaking friend and ask him for the translation of the word I want.

It sounds complicated. Are there any words in Hebrew which you feel you just can't translate?

When someone asks you why you did something and you say *stam* - there is no word like that in English. You can say "just because," but it's not the same.

What Israeli food do you like?

Falafel and schwarma are both famous as Israeli foods, but it's mainly American tourists and foreign students who eat them. My friends and I like pizza.

Where does your family go to for vacation?

We usually don't go on major trips unless my grandparents are here. When they come we go all over - I've been to most of the cities and famous spots in Israel. Every summer we hike in the Yehudia, a nature reserve in the south of the Golan Heights which has cliffs and waterfalls. We leave the night before and sleep at my grandmother (from the other side of the family) who lives in Tzfas. Then, we get up very early and get to the Yehudia at five in the morning. It so nice then - it's still cool and there is no one else around. There are two deep pools in which I love to swim. The hike takes about three hours. After that, we usually go out to eat and that's the end of a great day.

What is your favorite spot in Eretz Yisrael?

I like the Golan in general and Mt. Cheron (Hermon) in particular, I love cold weather, so I enjoy the snow on the mountain.



1. Getting a brachah from Rav Scheinberg, *shlitin*
 2. Celebrating a siyum on Mishnayos 3. We do lots of sports on the moshav. 4. Rav Leff, *shlitin*, the rav of the moshav

I also like swimming in the Kinneret. The trees around it are so beautiful.

Do you ever go to other countries?

We go to America every few years to visit family. America is great to visit, but I'm glad I live here.

Thanks for speaking with us, Betzael. *Shalom!* ☺