

WEEKEND

Ofer Aderet

Using technology to unearth buried treasure

In Slovakia, drones are helping to locate cemeteries; in Poland, a barcode will be linked to every graveyard; and in Ukraine images of headstones forgotten since the Holocaust are being posted on the internet. New tools are saving valuable historical information from oblivion

Every genealogist knows that a cemetery is not only a place of the dead. Valuable information is engraved on the headstones, which often is used to help solve family mysteries and centuries-old historical riddles. Accordingly, many genealogists have welcomed a new project that is enlisting drones and other technological means as part of the mission of locating and mapping the historic Jewish cemeteries in Europe.

Some 10,000 Jewish burial sites are scattered in some 50 countries across the Continent. Many of them are undocumented; abandoned and neglected for decades, since the end of World War II, they have fallen into a state of decay. As a result, the large amount of information that they contain – names, dates of birth and death, as well as other valuable texts engraved on the headstones – has been lost or inaccessible to researchers, historians and also to the families of the deceased.

The European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative (ESJF), a nonprofit organization established in 2015 in Germany, recently recruited a team of drone operators to map burial sites in a number of countries whose Jewish communities were annihilated during the Holocaust. In the year ahead, some 1,500 cemeteries will be documented by this means in Slovakia, Greece, Moldova, Lithuania and Ukraine.

The first experiment using drones is being carried out this month in the town of Pyriatyn, Ukraine, where a burial site with 400 headstones and graves dating from the 19th century was discovered in 2017.

The topographical information being collected by the drones will make it possible to determine where the boundaries of the cemeteries are so that they can be fenced in and restored. In addition to protecting the cemeteries from possible acts by vandals and anti-Semites, the fences will demarcate the graveyards as Jewish heritage sites for the benefit of both the local communities and visitors. The project has received a grant of 800,000 euros



Volunteers from the Israel-based Jewish Galicia and Bukovina organization, at work in the cemetery in Bolechow, Ukraine, in 2014. Most of the cemeteries where it is active were never previously documented. Jewish Galicia and Bukovina Organization

from the European Union.

"New" burial sites continue to be discovered from time to time, long after they have fell off the historical radar. In Belarus last month, the remains of hundreds of people who were shot to death in World War II were found in a mass grave at the site of the Jewish ghetto in Brest, adjacent to the border with Poland. The grave site was unearthed during work on a residential construction project in the city center. This week, it was reported that the remains of more than 700 people were found at the site, some of them with apparent gunshot wounds.

The use of the drones is the latest addition to extensive activity being undertaken by ESJF in recent years to save Jewish cemeteries from oblivion, in some cases, considering their degraded conditions, at the 11th hour.

"It is especially important for the next generation of Europeans to know about Jewish existence here and to combat the rise of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial," says Philip Carmel, the organization's CEO. "In many cases," he adds, "the cemeteries are the last physical testimony to the existence of centuries of Jewish life in the towns and villages of Europe, and there is no better way to fight Holocaust denial."

Besides launching drones, the researchers are also seeking out cemeteries with the aid of old maps, some of them predating World War I, and with aerial photographs taken by the Luftwaffe, the Nazi-era German air force, which were originally intended to locate bombing targets.

However, the most significant work is taking place not in the air, but very much on the ground. Many of the cemeteries that will be mapped in the year ahead were located with the assistance of local residents, who told project members about their existence and location, even about sites long abandoned and forgotten.

Similar preservation operations are also underway in Poland, which is often described as the largest Jewish graveyard in Europe, because of the size of its pre-Holocaust community and the scale of devastation it suffered during the

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KKK slime and 'koshering' Otzma

The ZOA is one of two major U.S. pro-Israel groups that have sided with the PM in the corrosive debate across the Jewish world over the Kahanist party



Adelson. A major ZOA donor, he and his paper have led a series of successful political operations, first to install Netanyahu, and then to help him to re-election. Andrew Harnik/AP

Bradley Burston

Hands down, the press releases I love the best are those which begin with a whopping lie the size of a sewage treatment plant.

But this week, when the Zionist Organization of America at long last formulated its response to Benjamin Netanyahu's embrace of the virulently, violently, unashamedly racist Kahanist Otzma Yehudit party as a key element of the prime minister's re-election campaign – the statement by the slobberingly pro-Trump and pro-Netanyahu ZOA easily exceeded even the highest expectations of dishonesty.

"Note," began the press release by ZOA head Mort Klein and other senior organization officials, who happen to be lawyers, "The Zionist Organization of America does not endorse candidates or political parties in the United States, Israel or anywhere else."

Then, hedging bets because of what's about to follow, the statement says, "This article should not be deemed to be an endorsement of any party, large

or small, or of any individual."

ZOA needed to say that, because the statement went on to blast as "strange, troubling and hypocritical" the condemnations by the Anti-Defamation League, American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the American Jewish Committee and the Israel Policy Forum of Otzma Yehudit – which the ZOA identified only as one of "two small right-wing pro-Israel political parties" that have agreed to merge.

Mort Klein will tell you that his organization is not defending Otzma Yehudit. After all, the statement – which spends nearly 5,000 fiery, notated words denouncing Israel's Arab par-

I am not suggesting that Mort Klein immigrate to Israel. Nor Sheldon Adelson. But they may lose their Bibi, and then where is their Zionism of America going to put them?

ties, and by extension, the Palestinian Israelis who vote for them – meekly insists: "ZOA has not been able to locate an Otzma Yehudit platform."

Mort Klein's right. He and his ZOA are not defending the Kahanist slime which, thanks to Netanyahu and his patron Sheldon Adelson, now has a fair shot at being part of Israel's next government. No. Klein is defending what really matters to him: Benjamin Netanyahu's hold on power, as well as major ZOA donor Sheldon Adelson's every wish.

Calling opposition to Netanyahu's efforts on behalf of Otzma "much ado about nothing," Klein's statement slammed the criticism of the Kahanist party as "Nazi name-calling against Jewish candidates."

And who are these just-folks Jewish candidates? Well, for starters, Klein wants us to know what they are not: "ZOA hopes that ADL, IPF, AIPAC and AJC will review the dangerous actions and statements of the Arab parties and their Knesset candidates discussed in this article, and direct their condemnation to those who oppose the State of Israel, and are truly racist and reprehensible, and a danger to the Jewish people and the Jewish State."

Not racist. Not reprehensible. Just one more small pro-Israel party. Led by, among others:

- Baruch Marzel – In 2000, on the sixth anniversary of the Hebron massacre in which Kahane disciple Baruch Goldstein machine-gunned 29 Muslim worshippers to death in the city's sacred Tomb of the Patriarchs, after which Goldstein was beaten to death by survivors of the attack, Marzel helped organize a Purim party at Goldstein's grave. "We decided to make a big party on the day he was murdered by Arabs," Marzel told the BBC, at the time.

- Michael Ben Ari – Declaring that "There are no innocents in Gaza," Ben Ari told followers during a 2012 Israel Defense Forces incursion in the Gaza Strip, "Why is it that after 200 assaults only 15 were killed? It should be 15 assaults and 2,000 killed!" In 2011, Ben Ari called leftist groups "traitors,"

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WEEKEND

JOURNEY

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Back then, in the 1980s-'90s, AIDS was as terrible a threat as the Black Plague. The disease, shrouded in myth and shadows, ravaged its victims in body and in mind. It struck fear into everyone. I recall the following scenario: As was our custom in the family, on Shabbat eve I make kiddush over the wine and, like my parents before me, take a sip from the cup and pass it to everyone else. When I learned that Ido was gay, I changed the custom, so that henceforth everyone had his own cup of wine. I must have come up with some lame excuse for doing that, I don't remember, but it was certainly transparent. I was driven by the fear that one of us would be infected by Ido.

Thinking about that now embarrasses and appalls me.

Amid the cacophony of emotions that gripped us, shame dominated at first. For a certain period, albeit very short – a few weeks – we ostensibly hid from people close to us the fact that Ido was gay. Afterward, we discovered that they'd already known, most of them for a while. Eventually we came out of that closet, but there was nothing heroic about it. It was Ido who, with great courage and profound integrity, announced his homosexuality publicly. And we followed suit. Since then we haven't hemmed and hawed about it.

Socially and publicly, over the years, we stood at Ido's side and in defense of gays. We were interviewed on radio and television. In short order, we found ourselves being approached by parents who found themselves in shock at learning that their son was gay or their daughter a lesbian. We understand what those parents are going through, and from the intensity of the feelings and experiences we endured, we are capable of seeing clearly the whirlpool of emotions they are being swept into.

Dozens of parents have drawn on us for help and have clung to our story, and perhaps even gained new and sensitive insight from us. In the eyes of many, we have become a model. Above all, we have strengthened a few couples who are our close friends and have children who are gay. We took part in one of the first Gay Pride Parades, in the early '80s. Together with another 10 or so parents we marched the entire route in the boisterous Tel Aviv event, carrying signs that said, "We love our children!"

During the initial, difficult peri-

ods, the whole family tried to learn to accept Ido as gay. I suppose that each of us was at a different place on the scale of understanding and acceptance. Despite the differences between us, we all made an effort to treat Ido straightforwardly, we displayed love for him, we accepted his friends and we were happy at every family encounter with him. Ido's intimate friends were like members of the family in our house. Ido's partner for the past decade, Shalev, is one of the family. And even so, Ido's ongoing doubts – regarding the nature of our acceptance of him as a homosexual – remain in the background of the relationships between us and probably always will.

Decades ago, quite a few parents who discovered that a son was gay would spurn him. Ido cared with selfless devotion for a friend of his

There's understanding and closeness between us, we express mutual concern, love exists. We occasionally discuss the subject of the scars that were seared into him in the period when I learned about his being gay.

who had AIDS and was confined in a Jerusalem hospice, solitary and abandoned. The friend's parents forsook him, and did not acknowledge him. They didn't come to his funeral after he died of the disease. We ostensibly took their place there. We felt grief and pity for the sick man, but also for his parents, alongside our profound anger at them.

'Walk humbly'

I've dwelt here on the changes I underwent, which in any event brought about a recalibration of traits and values. More compassion, I would say, which takes the form of greater attentiveness; more sensitivity and dignity toward people, a more complete fulfillment of the tenet, "Walk humbly." I can say clearly that this change was wrought in me almost entirely thanks to Ido, through the journey I traveled with him, through the development in my attitude toward him and the transformation in our mutual relationship. I have focused here on the question of homosexuality, but it also constituted an incentive for a change in my approach to and behavior vis-a-vis all human beings,

especially those who are different from me.

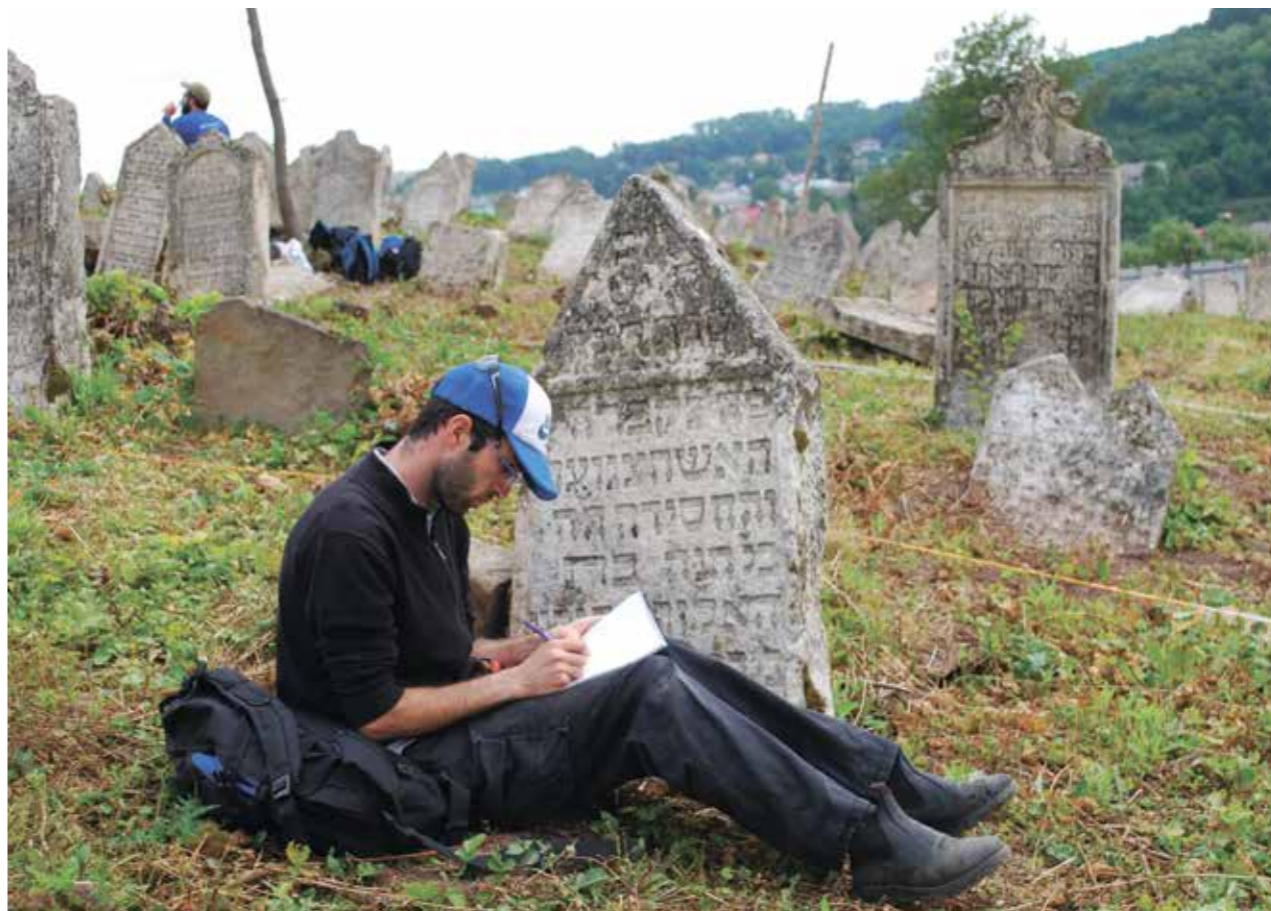
Four years ago, Ido was asked in an interview about his relations with his parents. Speaking about his ties with me, he said, "I learned a great deal from my father, but I think he learned more from me." That remark may sound arrogant, but he said it in a tone of seriousness and respect, and that's how I took it. Through Ido I learned about the inner resilience that can accrue to a person who clings tenaciously to his authentic identity. Above all, I learned, though his mediation, about myself.

Not long ago, when I spoke with Ido about the changes I had undergone in my attitude toward him, he said to me teasingly, "But that wouldn't have happened to you if it hadn't been for Mom." I accept that; he's absolutely right. Were it not for Neta, I would probably be stuck in a rut of being patronizing and arrogant. It was she who, without philosophizing and without tiresome verbal battering, unlike me, led the household and the acceptance of Ido in a spontaneous and natural way, and with the finely honed intuitions of a loving, caring, supportive and responsible mother. As such, she is the one who determined the approach the house would take toward him. For her, love and responsibility are one and the same.

My relations with Ido these days are lovely. There's understanding and closeness between us, we discern similarities of character, we express mutual concern, love exists. We occasionally discuss the subject of the scars that were seared into him in the period when I learned about his being gay and was adjusting to it, in our conversations.

To conclude, I want to say that along with the recognition of my flaws as a father to my children, and my regrets about them, I think that the education I gave them, of course together with Neta, was, all in all, a good one. I see clearly my positive qualities and traits imprinted in them. And even if my children are grown and independent, opinionated and critical, as I wished them to be – they appreciate the wisdom that I have accumulated and accept a good deal of my advice, show basic respect for my authority as their father and, the main thing, show their love for me.

This article was adapted from Prof. Yeshayahu Tadmor's new book (in Hebrew), "Education: What Is It for Me?" In it, the author, 84, a former principal of the Reali School in Haifa, head of the Levin College of Education in Tel Aviv and chairman of the Spirit in Education Movement, describes the development of his educational identity and approach.



A volunteer at the Buczacz, Ukraine, cemetery in 2017. And what of documentation of Israel's cemeteries? Here, chaos reigns.

Jewish Galicia and Bukovina Organization

TREASURE

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war. Last December, the chief rabbi of Poland, Michael Shudrich, and the country's minister of culture, Piotr Gliniski, launched a new project intended to map the country's 1,400 Jewish cemeteries, and whatever is learned about the people buried in them will be entered into a central database that will also be accessible by using one's phone to scan a barcode situated at the entrance to each cemetery.

One of the most efficient ways to make the information contained in the cemeteries available is by entering images of the headstone texts into a digital database. A current example of such an effort is a project being led by Ilia Lurie, a researcher of Eastern European Jewry and administrative director of the Israel-based Jewish Galicia and Bukovina Organization. "For almost a decade now, we have been redeeming many Jewish cemeteries from oblivion, among them sites that possess cultural, artistic, historic and national value," he told Haaretz.

The organization's volunteers survey cemeteries, photograph tombstones and post their findings in the

organization's internet database. Last summer, they scored a major success by locating the grave of Esther Czaczkes, mother of the writer S.Y. Agnon, who died in 1909 at the age of 43 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery of Buczacz, in Ukraine. It turns out that this cemetery was in continuous use for some 400 years. More than 2,000 headstones from the site have survived.

"Paradoxically, they attest to the Jewish community's vibrant and diversified life," Lurie noted. "Their size and artistic quality reflect the strength of the community in that period."

This cemetery, like others in which the Israeli group is active, was never previously documented. The volunteers mapped all the surviving headstones and deciphered their inscriptions, and then uploaded the material to <http://jgaliciabukovina.net> (in English, Hebrew and Ukrainian).

The cemetery in Buczacz occupies a special place in the life and work of Nobel Prize laureate Agnon. In addition to his mother's grave, which had been lost since the Holocaust, the headstone of the writer's grandfather Rabbi Yehuda Farb, who had a special relationship with the young Agnon, was also found.

"Models for the protagonists of Agnon's works as well as quite a few of his other acquaintances – grocers, midwives, sages, teachers, physicians

and public activists – were laid to rest here, and their memory is engraved on the headstones we documented," Luria said.

The epitaphs further enhance the singularity of the Buczacz cemetery, he added: "They excel in extraordinary Hebrew phraseology, a highly developed literary genre, a type of popular poetry that is thrilling and beautiful. The literary atmosphere attests to the ground from which Agnon's distinctive talent and style sprang."

What about documentation Israel's cemeteries? Here, chaos reigns. No up-to-date national database exists containing all the information available about the cemeteries in this country. The site-specific search engines used by the burial society of Tel Aviv and the Central District, for example, or the Mount of Olives cemetery, are problematic and not user-friendly. Other cemeteries in Israel are neither mapped nor have computerized records of those buried there.

The private sector offers a partial solution. BillionGraves, an international documenter of cemeteries, contains photographs and other information about tens of thousands of graves in Israel. A search there will also turn up the soldier Harry Potter, who was killed in Hebron in July 1939, toward the end of the Arab Revolt, and buried in the British military cemetery in Ramle.

Marianne Huisman, 86; lives in Ra'anana, flying to Amsterdam

Hello, can I ask what you'll be doing in Holland?

I'm going to an engagement party for one of my grandsons, in Amsterdam. I myself grew up in Rotterdam. When I was 10, there was the war.

What do you remember from the war?

I remember the start, Kristallnacht. My mother took a German-Jewish boy home to protect him. She then smuggled him into Belgium to relatives, even though it was no longer legal, and she had a police record as it was. When she returned from Belgium, she told us that we were all going to be killed.

Wow.

My father was hospitalized at that time in Leiden. They wanted to send us all on a transport. My mother came to the hospital and said to him, "Let's get out of here, now. Get dressed and be ready to leave." He asked her if they were going home, and she told him, "You can't go home anymore." When he was dressed, she removed the yellow star from his jacket. He couldn't believe she was doing that. He told her, "But we have to go on a transport."

Where were all of you in this story?

She met a lady who told her she would help, and she gave us to different people. My brother hid with one family, but I moved around between people, between 17 different families that hid me, and I didn't always know where I was going. Sometimes two weeks would go by and I would have already moved on to a different family.

Did you always get along with your hosts?

When my mother handed me over, she told me, "Behave nicely, be a good, polite girl, otherwise you won't survive and the Germans will kill you." That had a great impact on my life, and for years I had dreams that the Germans were coming and I had to hide.

It all sounds so traumatic, and you're so calm.

It wasn't a normal time. People didn't understand what was happening, they only understood afterward, after we survived and found out who was living and who was dead. It was a disturbing period.

"Disturbing" is quite an understatement.

Departures | Arrivals



My mother didn't want to talk about it, and neither did my husband. People didn't want to talk, and it only began slowly.

Did you talk about the Holocaust with your children?

For years I thought I hadn't passed on all my worries to my children because I didn't talk about the Holocaust, but afterward I discovered that it wasn't exactly like that. Things got through. They felt it. They had nightmares, too. Today I think it's important to talk about it. But to this day, when people my age meet, we talk about what went on before the war and what went on after the war.

What went on after the war?

In August 1945, we all returned to Rotterdam. There were people who were happy we had survived, and people who weren't so happy.

Who survived?

My father, mother, brother and I found each other; I don't even know how it happened, and we lived in the house of my grandmother, who had been killed in the gas chambers with four of my mother's sisters. After that my father died; he was sick even before the war, as I said. I got married in 1953 when I was just 20.

A youngster.

It's good to be a young parent, to

have fun with the children when you're young. Maybe you have no money, but you don't worry so much. I named my son Itzhak. Actually his name was originally Arik, after the son of a very nice family that I hid with.

Whom did you marry?

My husband was the son of a friend of my mother's, her regular bridge partner. My mother knew him from before the war and thought he was a nice boy. In 1980 we moved to Vancouver.

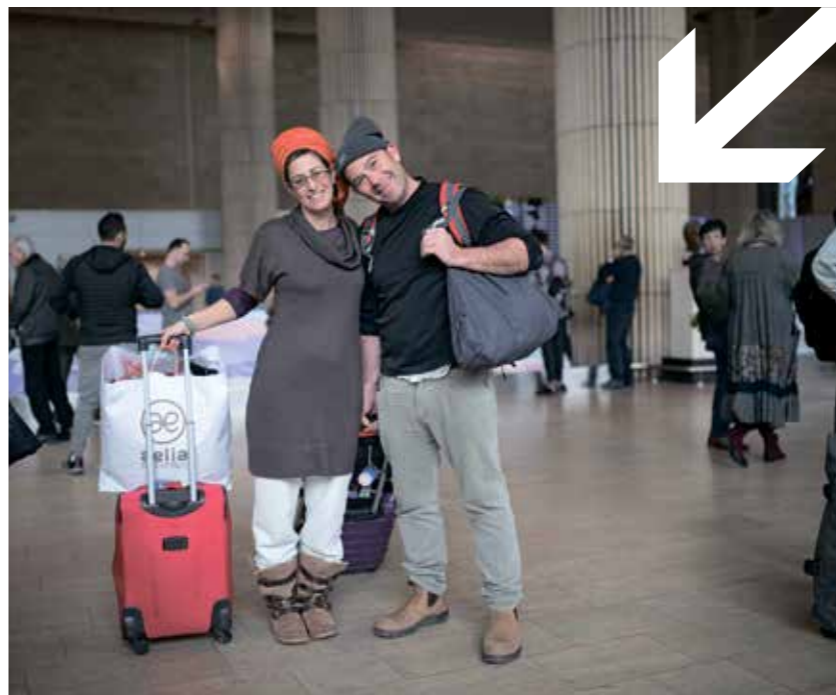
Did you want to work in Canada?

The truth is, I was afraid of another war in Europe, but in Israel I'm never afraid. We moved here in 1996. My daughter lives here, and we came to visit a lot. When we retired, we said we would try.

Tomer (the photographer): You're a very brave woman.

I don't feel special or brave, but I'm grateful that I'm healthy at my age, standing on my own two feet, living alone. I travel, clean, volunteer at an old-age home, and I can always go to visit my grandchildren, some here and some elsewhere in the world. I have two grandsons in New York and two in Holland, 10 grandchildren altogether. And very important to mention – also 25 great-grandchildren.

Liat Elkayam, Photos by Tomer Appelbaum



Judith Shachor, 42, and Yishai Shachor, 44; live in Sde Yaakov; arriving from Venice

Hello, can I ask what you were doing abroad?

Yishai: We went skiing and then two days in Venice.

First time there?

Judith: I'd never been, Yishai was there 20 years ago.

How was it?

Yishai: There are a million tourists a year there, the city is aging and there's a fear that it will be flooded or sink.

Judith: They're trying to teach the tourists to be nicer to the city.

Yishai: It looks like they're fed up with tourists.

What's it like in Sde Yaakov? In fact, what is Sde Yaakov?

Judith: It's a religious moshav, the first religious-Zionist moshav in the Jezreel Valley. When the moshav was established, only a third or a quarter of the residents were religious. Today there are more.

Do you know why?

Judith: There was a migration out by secular people.

Yishai: At first they didn't want to give land to religious people – they said it would be wasted land. They thought that if people didn't work the land for one day, they wouldn't succeed. They were tough, the people of the valley.

Judith: I think of Sde Yaakov as a mini-cosmos; there are older people and younger people, some who are renting for a certain period and others who were born there.

Are you both from there originally?

Judith: We were both born in Ra'anana. We grew up in religiously observant homes, we met in the army and we got to the moshav.

Yishai: We went there in search of fulfilling dreams.

Judith: We wanted to move and we were looking for something simpler, good people.

Tomer (the photographer): Hey! I was also born in Ra'anana, and there are good people there, too.

Judith: Definitely, if you're going to live in a city, then Ra'anana. It's a terrific city. But where we are, there's a calmer mood, pleasant people, a large community and open spaces for the children to run around in. Above all, things are

simpler, you don't need to be organized, or to be quiet between two and four in the afternoon.

Is it a moshav of farmers?

Yishai: There are farmers, we too are farmers. We grow grapevines, we have a vineyard, and as a hobby we have a winery.

Judith: The vineyard runs around the house's perimeter, we operate it with the children and make the wine ourselves. Every year we sell 600 bottles to people who come to us by word of mouth.

What type of wine?

Yishai: Cabernet blend and Muscat Canelli.

I know Cabernet and Muscat, but what's the Canelli?

Yishai: It's a sweet Muscat. Canelli is the name of a region in Italy where this type of vine comes from – even though we bought it at a plant nursery in Israel, of course.

Why this type?

Judith: We got a recommendation from a friend. The thinking was what would grow successfully. We wanted a type of grape that would be easy to grow in the valley, because it's not easy to grow grapes in the Jezreel Valley. Grapes grow well high up, they need cold, and the humidity in the valley brings pests.

Do you do the harvesting yourselves?

Judith: We do it early: the Cabernet around the middle or end of August, and the Muscat sometimes even earlier, at the beginning of July.

How do you do it?

Yishai: We just get up early.

Is it really that important when the harvest takes place?

Judith: The earlier the harvest, the less sweet the grape will be, because it will contain less sugar.

Why a winery? Are you wine connoisseurs?

Yishai: My father's dream was to have a winery. And we wanted to live on a moshav – horses, chickens. And think of yourself riding a horse in vineyards. I love it when the boy says, "Let's go for a hike" and the almond trees are in bloom. Sounds very romantic, but farming is hard work, from what I've heard.

Judith: It's not romantic at all. When we harvest, it's at three in the morning and we have to force the children to wake up, but it's a different feeling when the sun is shining and the grapefruits are sliced open.

What do you do when you're not growing grapes?

Yishai: I'm a pediatrician.

Judith: And I'm a veterinarian.