

MYRIAMCHEBAT • RELOCATION AND BELONGING

AFTER ALIYAH

You're Here. Now What?

For the stretch after arrival, when everything technically works and you still feel like you're running on fumes.

Seven sections on energy, language, friendship, grief and what to do next. No requirement to become a more grateful person.

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START WHERE YOU ARE

Start where you are

The bank card works. You know which bus. You recently had a conversation with a service provider that did not require a lie-down afterwards.

And you're tired in a way the day doesn't account for, lonely in a room full of people, and increasingly aware that you don't sound like yourself.

I wanted this. Everything's technically working. And I'm more tired than I've ever been and I don't feel like me.

That sentence is common enough to print on the teudat oleh. It is not proof you made a mistake. It is also not something to file under 'normal adjustment' and leave there for three years.

Both things need saying, because people tend to pick one. Either everything is a crisis, or everything is fine and they should stop complaining. Usually it's neither.

This workbook helps you sort out what's actually taking the energy, what matters to you, and which problems need practical help rather than a better attitude. Seven sections. Do them in any order. Write in it.

THE THING NOBODY TELLS YOU

Difficulty can become more noticeable after the first rush settles. While you're handling forms, boxes, ulpan, work and appointments, there may be very little room to notice the cost. If month fourteen feels harder than month two, that is **not necessarily a bad sign** - it may simply mean you finally have enough space to notice what has been building.

If a question opens more than you want to hold today, pause. Look around the room, put your feet on the floor, make a cup of something. You do not have to go through painful memories to get use out of this. These are invitations, not a stamina test.

ONE - WHERE ARE YOU, ACTUALLY

One - Where are you, actually

Before fixing anything, look at what is happening. You are allowed to report the last two weeks as they were, rather than as a successful oleh ought to have experienced them.

How long have you been here?

Since the move - or in the last few months - has anything else changed at work, home, health, finances, relationships or family life?

In one sentence, how have the past two weeks been?

Tick what fits

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ More tired than the day explains | ☐ Lonely, including around people |
| ☐ Irritable, tearful, flat or anxious | ☐ Snapping at people close to me more than I want to |
| ☐ Less interested in things I usually enjoy | ☐ Sleeping, eating or concentrating badly |
| ☐ Avoiding calls, forms or invitations | ☐ Drinking more than I used to, or more than I meant to |
| ☐ Comparing this life to the one before Aliyah, constantly | ☐ Reading news compulsively |
| ☐ Feeling unlike myself | ☐ Wondering whether to leave |

This is not a questionnaire with a score. These experiences can show up with ordinary adjustment, stress, low mood, anxiety, poor sleep, illness, medication changes, iron or thyroid problems, and many other physical or mental health conditions. A checklist cannot tell you why they are happening.

What is the biggest change from your usual self? How much is it interfering with ordinary life?

What is still helping, even slightly?

ONE - WHERE ARE YOU, ACTUALLY

Two things worth flagging honestly

DRINKING

Alcohol can become woven into newcomer social life without anyone really deciding that it will. Friday-night dinners, holiday gatherings, networking events and 'come meet everyone' evenings can arrive with a lot of l'chaims. Add unstructured evenings and people who do not know your baseline, and it can creep up. If you noticed an increase, it is not a character verdict - it is useful information worth watching and saying out loud to someone.

SNAPPING AT PEOPLE CLOSE TO YOU

Exhaustion often comes out sideways and lands on whoever is nearest. If it is happening more than you want, treat that as information. If anyone in the household is frightened or unsafe, get support sooner rather than later.

Understanding why something is hard does not mean you have to put up with it. You can know exactly what is contributing and still need help carrying it.

What would make the next week 10% easier?

TWO - WHAT'S TAKING THE ENERGY

Two - What's taking the energy

You did three things today. One was a phone call in Hebrew, one was a form that appeared to have been translated by a committee, and one involved navigation of a kind normally associated with expeditions.

Count the effort, not the items crossed off.

Think of your week as a budget. Some things cost more than they used to. Some sources of rest have quietly vanished. And some demands do not get cheaper because you got more organised.

What is costing most right now? Language, admin, money, work, caring for someone, the news, health, uncertainty, something else?

Which of those could be reduced, shared, delayed, or made easier with help?

What used to restore you that has quietly disappeared? Is a smaller version possible here?

Pick one change

Get help with the form instead of moving it to next week again. Eat before evening ulpan. Take the walk without converting it into a step target. Hand one household task to someone else.

Sometimes the useful change is a boundary. Sometimes it is treatment. Sometimes it is admitting that what is being asked of you is more than one person can do, and that this is a fact rather than a failing.

This week I will reduce or share:

I will make room for:

CHECK WHAT YOUR PHONE IS DOING TO YOU

News, WhatsApp groups and contact with people abroad can be genuine connection, useful information, or a comparison loop that costs you the evening. Same activity, different function, different days. Notice what happens during and after before deciding what to change.

TWO - WHAT IS TAKING THE ENERGY

A note about rest

Rest is allowed to be ordinary. It does not require a subscription, optimisation plan, or proof that you earned it.

One form of rest that actually works for me here:

THREE - LANGUAGE AND FEELING FOOLISH

Three - Language, and feeling foolish

You are an articulate adult who can hold a room. Yesterday you needed a completely ordinary household item, knew exactly what it looked like, and spent ten minutes trying to describe it because the Hebrew word would not arrive.

It is a strange narrowing. Your humour, precision and authority can all feel harder to reach. Every interaction takes deliberate attention, and by late afternoon you are not tired of Hebrew. You are tired *from* it.

And it gets personal fast: *I sound stupid. I should be better by now. They think I'm an idiot.* You do not have to settle whether those thoughts are true before deciding what would help.

What have you avoided because it would be in Hebrew? What is the first conclusion your mind makes about you?

Separate the problem from the verdict

'I do not have the vocabulary for this appointment' points to language support. 'I will look foolish asking someone to repeat themselves' points to a low-stakes chance to practise. 'I cannot face another interaction today' may point to rest. Different problems need different answers.

When a harsh conclusion shows up, try naming it as a thought rather than a fact - for example, 'I'm having the thought that I look foolish' - and then return to the actual task: what do I need to understand, ask, or do next? The point is not to chant a phrase. It is to create enough distance to choose the next useful step.

One low-stakes interaction I am willing to try, and how I can make it easier:

One situation where I need an interpreter, translated information or someone with me:

KEEP THE STAKES IN PROPORTION

Practise where a mistake costs you little. Health, legal and financial decisions deserve enough support that you actually understand what you are agreeing to. Using your strongest language for something important is not a failure of integration.

FOUR - THE FRIENDSHIP PROBLEM

Four - The friendship problem

Adult friendship involves a startling amount of administration for something supposed to happen naturally.

Someone has to suggest the coffee. Someone has to follow up. Frequently that someone is you, repeatedly, with no brass band announcing that a lifelong friendship has begun.

There is no universal timetable. Repeated contact creates opportunities, but availability, compatibility, language, money, transport, life stage and luck matter too. One unanswered message is not a referendum on your social future.

Where do you see the same people regularly? Which setting is actually accessible and feels like a possible fit?

Who have you met that you would like to know better? One or two people is enough.

A MESSAGE YOU CAN BORROW

'It was good talking to you at _____. Fancy a coffee or a walk next week? I could do Tuesday afternoon or Friday morning.'

Specific days do most of the work. 'We should get together sometime' reliably produces nothing.

If they are busy, offer another option. If contact repeatedly stays one-sided, take that as information and widen the field rather than pouring all your effort into one connection. Reciprocity can develop slowly; it also matters.

What does your mind say about being the one who initiates? What could you do anyway if connection matters to you?

MAKE THE TASK SMALLER

The goal might be going back to one group a second time, greeting a neighbour, joining a recurring class, volunteering, accepting one invitation, or having one conversation. Online counts. Friendship in the language that lets you be yourself counts. Belonging does not require abandoning the people who already know you.

FIVE - WHAT YOU HAVEN'T CALLED GRIEF

Five - What you haven't called grief

You miss the people. You may also miss being the person who knew the people - the one who could get something sorted with a single phone call, whose professional experience needed no explanation, who could be funny without a translation budget.

Those are losses of access, role and familiarity, not only geography. Because Aliyah was chosen, meaningful, necessary, or some combination of those, it can be hard to know where grief fits.

Choosing something does not cancel its cost. Not every part of the move felt freely chosen anyway.

Some losses also have no clean ending. The old life continues somewhere else, changing without you. That kind of ongoing, unresolved loss is sometimes called ambiguous loss.

What do you miss that you have not said out loud?

What part of who you are has less room here? How could you give it some room back?

What do you want to keep from the old life? What do you need distance from?

If it feels useful, notice what is here for a moment - sadness, anger, relief, longing, confusion. You do not have to turn it into a lesson or decide what it means. If it becomes overwhelming, orient to the room, do something practical, or come back another time. You are not required to push through an exercise.

BOTH CAN BE TRUE

Missing the old life does not settle the question of the new one. Neither does gratitude. Aliyah can be meaningful and costly at the same time.

SIX - HOW AM I DOING, REALLY

Six - How am I doing, really

Being productive is one piece of information. What it costs you to stay productive is another.

You can be answering emails, feeding people and making appointments while struggling badly. You can also have a miserable Tuesday without developing a disorder. One photograph is not enough.

Over the past two weeks - sleep, appetite, energy, enjoyment, concentration - what has changed?

Am I recovering after hard days, or just getting through until the next one?

What is the effect on work, relationships and basic self-care? What would someone who knows me well notice?

Is this improving, fluctuating, holding steady, or getting worse?

When to ask for help

Talk to a doctor or mental health professional if distress persists, gets harder to manage, or disrupts ordinary life. A pattern lasting a couple of weeks is worth raising, especially with low mood or loss of interest; severe or rapidly worsening symptoms deserve attention sooner. This is a prompt to get assessed, not a waiting period you have to serve.

Poor sleep, exhaustion and concentration problems have many causes. Do not assume they are all emotional, or all about Aliyah. Ask your doctor about physical causes too.

Who will I contact, and when? If they are not available, who is my next option?

You do not have to get worse in order to deserve care. Asking while you still have some capacity can make the next step much easier.

SEVEN - SOME SITUATIONS THAT NEED NAMING

Seven - Some situations that need naming

If you arrived pregnant, postpartum, or with a baby

A new baby plus a new country can be a lot at once: an unfamiliar health system, support people far away, disrupted routines, and appointments in a language you are still learning. If your mood, anxiety, sleep or functioning are worrying you, tell your tipat halav nurse, doctor or another qualified clinician and ask for care in a language you can use.

If the security situation hits you hard

Sirens, sudden noise, news and uncertainty affect people differently. Past experiences can shape how strongly your body reacts. If your reactions are persistent, intense, or interfering with life, consider talking with a clinician who understands trauma and the Israeli context rather than using other people's reactions as your benchmark.

If you are drinking more

Ask plainly: has your use gone up since Aliyah? Are you drinking earlier, alone, or mainly to sleep or switch off? Have you tried to cut down and found it harder than expected? Has someone close to you raised it? None of that by itself means you have a substance use disorder (SUD). It is still worth mentioning to a doctor or qualified clinician.

If home does not feel safe

Moving country can concentrate practical power inside a household - language, income, accounts, transport, local knowledge. If someone is frightening you, controlling your money or movements, threatening you, or hurting you, that is not an adjustment problem. Seek specialist confidential support and consider whether your device or written material can be seen by that person.

WHEN EVERYTHING IS TOO MUCH RIGHT NOW

When everything is too much right now

Sometimes the immediate task is not reflection. It is deciding whether to sit down, call someone, eat, leave a noisy room, or ask for practical help.

If you are physically unsafe or there is a security emergency, follow official instructions and use emergency services as needed. A grounding exercise does not replace a shelter, medical care or practical safety.

If you are safe enough to pause

- Look around and name two or three ordinary things you can see.
- Notice a point of contact - feet on the floor, back against a chair, hand around a mug - if that feels okay.
- Name what is happening plainly: 'I'm overwhelmed.' 'My mind is going fast.' No explanation required.
- Pick one immediate need: water, food, quiet, a person, practical help, professional help.

If a technique makes you feel worse, leave it. Use something external and concrete instead. The goal is not to perform coping correctly; it is to make the next decision a little easier.

One external thing that helps me orient:

One person I can contact:

THE NEXT TWO WEEKS

The next two weeks

Choose a plan your actual life can hold. The aim is not a personality renovation. It is one or two moves that make life more workable.

One practical problem I can reduce, share or get help with:

One place or person I will return to for connection:

One appointment, call or support request I will make:

One thing I will keep doing because it helps:

At the end of two weeks, ask what helped and what got in the way. If something did not happen, look at the conditions before turning it into a verdict on yourself.

WHERE TO GET HELP

Where to get help

Ongoing care

Your kupat holim or family doctor can help with assessment and referrals. Ask about language, referral requirements, cost and waiting times. If the first appointment offered is too far away for what you need, ask what is available sooner.

For a private clinician, ask about professional registration, relevant experience, language, fees, and how urgent needs are handled. **Fit matters.** You are allowed to speak with more than one provider, use introductory calls, ask questions, and decide that someone is not the right match. A directory listing or impressive credential is a starting point, not a guarantee of a good therapeutic fit.

KeepOlim / Tikva

Tikva by KeepOlim offers subsidized individual therapy for Olim in multiple languages. Their current information says fees are adjusted on a sliding scale and that people are not denied services because they cannot afford them; free weekly therapy is specifically offered to Lone Soldiers. Tikva also operates a 24/7 emotional-support line at **074-775-1433**. Check current availability at KeepOlim before relying on a specific service.

ERAN

ERAN provides emotional first aid on 1201. Check current language and channel options directly with ERAN.

My first option:

My backup option:

Someone who can help me make contact:

A REQUEST YOU CAN BORROW

'I've been struggling with _____ for _____. It's affecting _____. I'd like an assessment or support in a language I can use. What is the earliest appropriate option, and what can I use while I wait?'

A LIFE YOU CAN LIVE IN

A life you can live in

You probably arrived with a picture of who you would be here. Reality has issued revisions.

That can be disappointing. It is also useful information about what you need, what you want to protect, and what no longer fits.

You do not have to love every part of life in Israel to start shaping it. You do not have to prove Aliyah was right by managing without help. And you do not need to reach a final verdict on your entire future every time you have a lonely evening.

What do I understand about my situation now that I did not have words for before?

One need I can name more clearly:

One action, boundary or request that might meet it:

About the author. Myriam Chebat, MSW, RSW, is a clinical social worker registered in Israel and Quebec, Canada, with over 14 years of clinical and psychosocial experience across clinical, humanitarian and international settings. She made Aliyah herself and works with adults online across Israel and in person in Haifa.

Enquiries: mc.psychosocial@gmail.com - not an emergency service. This workbook is educational material. It does not provide diagnosis, individual assessment or therapy.

NOTES AND FURTHER READING

Notes and further reading

These exercises are informed by psychological flexibility, practical problem-solving and trauma-informed principles: noticing thoughts without treating them as instructions, making room for mixed feelings, identifying what matters, and taking workable action. This is educational material, not an individual intervention or validated screening tool.

- World Health Organization. Doing What Matters in Times of Stress: An Illustrated Guide (2020).
- SAMHSA. Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach (2014).
- Israel Ministry of Health. Mental Health First Aid Centers.
- ERAN. Emotional first aid - check current language options and hours.
- KeepOlim / Tikva Mental Health Program - subsidized therapy for Olim, free weekly therapy for Lone Soldiers, and a 24/7 support line.

Service information checked October 2026. Availability changes; verify before relying on it. These organisations have not endorsed this workbook.