



FIRST RAIN

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When Abby moves with her family to Israel, she misses her grandmother and remembers the fun they had with each other. Writing to each other helps, but it doesn't take the place of spending time together.

At the heart of *First Rain* is a family's move to Israel. For many Jews, residing in the Jewish homeland has special meaning; for them, this move can feel like "coming home" and is known as "making *aliyah*" (from Hebrew, meaning "ascend"). In this contemporary story, Abby's family is clearly making *aliyah* to fulfill personal aspirations; over the centuries, however, many Jews have relocated to Israel because of anti-Semitism or even expulsion from their home country.

EXAMPLES OF ALIYAH

A prime example of *aliyah* comes from the book of Genesis, when our patriarch Abraham and his family journeyed to live in the Land of Canaan. Immigrants to Israel—called *olim* in Hebrew—have been arriving ever since, often in great numbers. Waves of immigration have occurred through the centuries, often at times of persecution.

One example of mass immigration to Israel is Operation Magic Carpet (1949-'50) when nearly the entire population of 49,000 Yemenite Jews was airlifted to Israel: most of those people had never seen an airplane, yet believed the prophecy from the Book of Isaiah that the children of Israel would return on "wings." Another astonishing instance

of concentrated immigration occurred with Operation Solomon when, on a single day in 1991, 14,325 Jews were transported to Israel from Ethiopia.

In addition to those mentioned above, Jews from India, France, and the former Soviet Union—to name a few—have made *aliyah* in large numbers. A variety of Israeli organizations now exists to assist these new residents—a significant number of whom are children—helping them learn Hebrew, find work and housing, and adjust to a new and sometimes very different life. For Abby, a home in Israel brought new experiences, new sights, new foods, a new language, and, after a long, dry summer, a delightful walk with her grandmother in the season's first rain. Pj

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