

Chapter 12

Adopting Palmach Tzuba

The needs of the Jewish people were constantly in Dr. Dunn's mind. Amidst a clutter of odds and ends, I found the following article, written at his dictation. Unfortunately, there is not a date on the yellowed paper, but it seemingly refers to the Holocaust years at a time before the establishment of the State of Israel.

As praying Jews turn to Jerusalem, so must every Jew today turn not only his head, but his heart, also to Jerusalem. In these days when the spirits and hearts of Jews everywhere are being threatened, we must in small ways, large ways, in any way, help to place the hearts of our suffering fellow Jews throughout Eastern Europe today in Palestine.

Prayers and trees are not the only things grown in Palestine today. Palestine grows men, women and children—people who wait for the Zionist Organization of America or some one or other of our benevolent agencies to help them. We need land! These Jews must be placed firmly on the land of their forebears and make of that land something for the world to see and marvel at. The Keren Kayemeth has done stellar work in placing and directing their energies on land purchase through the Jewish National Fund. But there is something else we can do—we may start something which can spread to the Jews of every state and over the world. It is up to us to give it emphasis—Let us explain what we mean!

Would you mind buying something for some stricken Jewish family at a quarter a week, knowing that your 25-cent coin may well place them in a safe

position and keep them from a poverty-stricken existence? If you wouldn't mind, probably your Jewish neighbor wouldn't either. That's 50 cents a week from each family—that's how it would spread. Now, if you would undertake 25 cents per week for two years, totaling \$25 for those two years—and if enough people followed—we could raise \$50,000 in these two years and, in giving this money to the JNF, we would start a colony in Palestine for the objects of Hitler's wrath. Many refugees could be placed here and given comfort, work, and security—comfort in knowing that they are being remembered by their fellow Jews, who are working to rebuild our homeland, and security to face their work.

On this colony would be placed any or all refugees, with preference being given to any relatives of our state's subscribers. In the City Hall of our colony would be the Golden Book and all of our subscribers' names would be engraved therein for posterity. This plan in no way conflicts with any of the JNF drives or campaigns but is just the little extra added which every Jew or Jewess wants to do. Massachusetts may follow the example of Connecticut, and New York, too, in the near future. Thus, our Connecticut Colony may be remembered for being the first but not the last of its kind.



Indeed, the adoption of the Connecticut Colony, Kibbutz Palmach Tzuba, served as a forerunner to many adoptions by American Zionist State organizations. In later years, the Connecticut ZOA adopted Afula and sent help to its hospital.

Tzuba is today a twenty-minute drive from Jerusalem. In 1948, when it was adopted, it was on the border between Israel and Jordan, and the settlers kept a 24-hour armed watch over their small community. In 1948, the young men and women who had fought in that strategic military spot



Kibbutz Palmach Tzuba was built near what was then the Israeli–Jordanian border, and the palmachniks kept constant vigil.



Life was difficult in the early days of Kibbutz Palmach Tzuba, where clearing a field for farming often required teamwork.

decided to build their kibbutz “where our comrades spilled their blood,” as they wrote in a letter to Dr. Dunn. With that same letter came an album of pictures, including one showing the kibbutzniks clearing their land by tying ropes around the tremendous rocks which covered it, attaching the ropes to their waists, and pulling the rocks away. It was this snapshot which prompted Dr. Dunn to ask the question, “Would a tractor be of help to you?”



When my husband and I first visited Tzuba, in 1965, we learned the history of this question, even as we enjoyed seeing its results. Amnon Magen, one of the original members of the kibbutz, told us that the letter was read aloud at a kibbutz meeting, and the discussion revolved around the proper reply to send the correspondent from America who could conceive of sending them such a gift. They had no real faith that he would deliver on such a tremendous promise, but their final decision was to send a resounding “Yes!” What harm would it do?

Thus began the effort by Dr. Dunn and his Zionist *chaverim*—friends—to raise the sum of \$25,000 to buy a tractor for *Nachlat Connecticut*—the Connecticut Colony. I recall the questions, and the applause, when Father presented the idea of the adoption to a meeting of the Connecticut chapter of the ZOA. Large donations were pledged at the meeting, and later the remainder of the money was raised by appeals on the local level around the state. The aid of Mr. I. Savin of the Savin Construction Company was enlisted, to help select and ship the tractor. Ruth Mag served as Father’s secretary-treasurer and worked on all aspects of the endeavor.



In the spring of 1953, when Morris and Rosa visited *Nachlat Connecticut*, along with Mr. William Cohen of New Britain, Mr. Isaac Carmel (one of the National ZOA speakers), and a Mr. Raucher of New London, the tractor was waiting in



Dr. Dunn (left) led the effort to raise funds and donate a tractor to the kibbutz, and in 1953 he and Rosa (as well as Messrs. Raucher, Carmel, and Cohen) visited Israel to deliver the tractor.

Haifa Harbor. The Savin Construction Company had arranged for its shipment.

To transport the tractor to Jerusalem, the Israeli government closed the one road leading from Haifa to Jerusalem, and the young men of the kibbutz borrowed two trucks and drove to Haifa. They loaded the tractor on the two trucks parked side by side, and they drove tandem over the cleared road and up the Jerusalem heights to Tzuba. Once there, they tied a huge ribbon around the vehicle, and it was ready for the Dedication Ceremony. Needless to say, it was Dr. Dunn who was given the great privilege of cutting the ribbon, and then riding for the first time in the tractor.

A few years later, when the Kibbutz built its dental clinic, it named the building the Dr. Morris S. Dunn Dental Clinic. He was very honored and pleased when he was informed about the name, and it meant a great deal to him.



Life has changed considerably at Nachlat Connecticut over the years. When their ploughing was finished, the kibbutz

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We have been in Israel for only three weeks but we already feel that we have lived through a lifetime of experience. One must actually see the destroyed buildings everywhere in order to understand how amazing and miraculous is the survival of Israel and the establishment of the State. The evidence of the War of Liberation is seen everywhere, but more about our visit later.

First I want to tell you about the Nachlat Connecticut and the people that live there - in Kibbutz Tzuba. We actually lived in the Kibbutz for a while. I talked to all kinds of people while in Jerusalem including prominent religious people, representatives of the press, and high Government officials, and I learned the following facts: The Government is making an effort to form a chain of kibbutzim around the periphery of the country, or a so-called border patrol. The settlements of this sphere are very important for the development and protection of the country. The hardships are so many that it requires a youth with an unusual spirit of pioneering. Their political orientation does not enter the picture whatsoever. The function of Tzuba, on the land of Nachlat Connecticut, as of similar kibbutzim, is to guard the highways and the corridor to protect the lifeline to Jerusalem, so that the residents of the city can have a certain amount of security.

Tzuba is a typical border colony. There is a certain division of personnel so that frontier is guarded, - its members are ex-soldiers. We, and Mr. Cohen of New Britain, attended the Seder. It was the most inspiring religious ceremony we ever witnessed. Most of the boys and girls are very refined and cultured, and self-sacrificing too. It is boys and girls, like those at Tzuba, who sacrificed their lives to bring water and bread to Jerusalem during the siege. This was distributed to all people, regardless of their religious and political beliefs. The destroyed vehicles that are stacked along the road in the Jerusalem corridor, the monuments that mark the places where these young people died, - all are silent witnesses of their heroism. I heard it said by some people in Jerusalem that the Maccabees have come alive once again.

*The tractor is in the port of Haifa
The boat is waiting till we
depart before it unloads*

Sincerely yours,

LIBBIE DUNN

*But Rebecca that we have
many many surprises for her that she will be proud
of her grandpa + Grandma*

rented the tractor out to neighboring kibbutzim, and this gave them some income so they could begin other enterprises. As one of their first efforts, they had tried unsuccessfully to raise ducks—but without a pond or a way of providing water for the birds. They therefore decided to try raising chickens; their first chicken brooder, and then several additional ones, came from their adoptive “parents” in Con-



Children on Kibbutz Tzuba for years lived in Colchester House (l-r: Mr. Raucher, Dr. Dunn, Rosa Dunn, Mr. Carmel, and Mr. Cohen)

necicut. By their hard work, they became a supplier of eggs and chicks which at one time they shipped over the entire Middle East as well as into Europe.

With the development of the kibbutz movement's organization, they built a large factory to produce replacement windshields for European cars. They also had a herd of cows, producing milk and meat for themselves and for market, and they still today have a carpentry shop which produces their own furniture. At one time they even had a piece of land in the Negev where they raised cotton, which Amnon assured us was superior to that raised in Egypt. On recent trips to Israel, my grandchildren and nephews have seen further developments, such as a miniature amusement park where parents bring children and pay a fee for their rides and games.



The children of Nachlat Connecticut have always been their greatest concern and their greatest joy. For many years, the children were brought up in the Children's House, but more recently the homes have been enlarged, kitchens have been



Amnon Magen introduces a kibbutz child to Rosa Dunn.

built in them, and accommodations are available so that families live together.

On our first visit to the kibbutz, in 1955, we noticed a message on a Bulletin Board concerning the “Wilderness Experience” of the Bar Mitzvah class. It was explained to us that the Bar Mitzvah boys were taken into an uninhabited place in the countryside and left there to find their way back home. This was their rite of passage from childhood to becoming men.

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One of the individuals whom Morris and Rosa befriended on the kibbutz has become part of our family, as I believe we have become part of his. Akiva Ilan traveled with my parents, after their stay in Tzuba, to make the rest of their trip easier, because my father had been ill for a few days while at the kibbutz. Later, Akiva came to our home in New Britain when he was attending college in the United States. I recall that he came without a topcoat the first time, and Pa took him out and bought him a winter coat to make certain that he would be warm in America. Our home became his vaca-



In this photo of the tractor's donors and recipients, Akiva Ilan is standing immediately behind and to the right of Rosa Dunn.

tion home when he could not get back to visit his family in Israel. A few years later, after his marriage to his lovely Dina, he took a position teaching at the University of Chicago and then returned to Connecticut with his wife and family of three children, Rutie, Oded, and Daniel. While Akiva studied at Yale University, Dina dealt with keeping the household going in a foreign place, making certain that the children were in the proper schools and happy, and keeping enough quiet time so that Akiva could study.

Daniel was born in Illinois and therefore has dual citizenship here and in Israel. When the Ilans first arrived for their stay in America, they stopped to visit a friend in New Rochelle, and we drove in from Connecticut to see them. My daughter, Rebecca, and her husband, Marc, were living in the Bronx at the time, and they also came to New Rochelle to visit. Dina was pregnant with Danny, and Rebecca with Adam. The two young women found it difficult to embrace because of their pregnancies, and they underwent a bit of teasing from all of us!

Even now, in the year 2000, we still are in touch with them and their families.



While in Israel, the five Connecticut visitors oversaw the dedication of several JNF groves, including the “Site of the David Rachlin Grove (New Britain, Conn., USA)”

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Over the years, each time that my husband and I visited the kibbutz we were treated as honored guests—“the family of Dr. Dunn.”

On one visit, we went to Tzuba to see their Shavuot celebration. Since Shavuot is a feast of the first fruits, they had a parade of their “firsts” for the preceding year. I recall a parade of baby carriages, the babies dressed in their best, and pushed along by their parents. There was also a new truck for the kibbutz, which went along behind the cavalcade of babies. Then the older children performed a little ceremony, where they brought arms full of fresh flowers to a stage and performed some of the holiday songs. The symbolism, and the memory of the fresh young voices singing in Hebrew, make me cry even as I write this, for in my lifetime I saw the dream of the State of Israel become a reality. I feel that my generation, as well as that of my father before me, have been privileged to share Theodor Herzl’s dream, his compulsion, to participate in the building of a nation: Am Yisroel Chai.