

Settling In.

You came home. Now let's help you feel it.

For Olim | English-Speaking Students | Lone Soldiers



WELCOME

You did the hard part.

Moving to Israel is one of the most courageous things a person can do. Whether you packed up your life from London, Johannesburg, New York, or Sydney – you chose something most people only dream about. You said yes to history, to belonging, to being part of something ancient and electric all at once.

But if we're being honest? The first months can be genuinely hard. The bureaucracy is real. The loneliness is real. The gap between the Israel you imagined and the Israel of malfunctioning bank apps and Hebrew forms you can't quite read – that gap is real too. And it's completely okay to feel all of it.

This guide was made for you – the English speaker figuring it all out, one awkward ulpan session, one sabich sandwich, and one unexpected moment of pure wonder at a time. Shemesh is here to make sure you don't do it alone.

Israel is the home of hope.

—Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Rabbi Sacks taught that the Hebrew word **teshuvah** often translated simply as 'repentance' – literally means **homecoming: a return, both spiritually and physically, to where you truly belong. If you are here, you are already home. Shemesh exists to help you feel it.**

+ What is Shemesh?

Shemesh means 'sun' in Hebrew – and like the sun, we show up every day, no matter what the weather is doing in your head.

We are a mental wellness platform built specifically for English speakers navigating life in Israel. Whether you're a new Oleh in the thick of culture shock, a student feeling far from home, or a lone soldier holding more than most...Shemesh was built for exactly where you are right now.

How it works:

You are matched with an HPCSA-registered therapist* who speaks English, understands the Olim experience, and delivers sessions remotely – from wherever you are in Israel. No waitlists. No Hebrew intake forms. No navigating a system that wasn't designed with you in mind. You book. You talk. You get real support, in the language you actually think in.

*Health Professions Council of South Africa – the statutory body responsible for regulating health professionals in South Africa.

THE REAL TALK

What no one really warns you about.

Settling in is not a straight line. Most people go through a genuine emotional arc—and knowing about it in advance makes it much easier to navigate.

Phase 1 — The High

Everything is incredible. The hummus is unreal. The sunsets make you cry. You feel like the most alive you've ever been. This phase is real — enjoy every second of it.

Phase 2 — The Crash

Then the bank won't open your account. Your Hebrew stalls at 'toda raba'. Someone is rude on the bus and you take it personally. The loneliness creeps in. This is completely normal, and it will pass.

Phase 3 — The Groove

You find your coffee spot. You make one real friend. You navigate the shuk without a map. You start to feel like yourself again — only a more interesting, more rooted version.

When the crash feels heavier than it should.

Anxiety, loneliness, grief for the life you left, or the slow ache of second-guessing a decision you made with your whole heart — these are not signs that you made a mistake. They are the very human cost of a very brave choice. And they deserve more than 'just give it time'. Shemesh exists for exactly this. Real support, in English, from therapists who get it. No forms. No waitlists. Just a conversation when you need one.

COOL FACTS ABOUT LIVING IN ISRAEL

Things that will delight (and surprise) you.

320 Sunny Days

Tel Aviv averages 320 sunny days a year. Always carry water — dehydration is one of the biggest triggers for anxiety and low mood.

Kafe Kar is Life

Iced coffee (kafekar) is an Israeli institution. A blended coffee drink that becomes your best friend from April to October.

Startup Nation

Israel has more startups per capita than any country on earth. The innovation energy is electric and very contagious.

Everything Delivers

From shawarma to sushi to laundry — delivery culture here is next level. Wolt and 10bis are your new best friends.

Chutzpah is Good

Israelis are direct. What feels rude at first is just efficient communication. You'll appreciate — and then adopt — it quickly.

The Train is Great

Israel's rail network links Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and Be'er Sheva. It's cheap, air-conditioned, and actually runs on time.

PRACTICAL GUIDE

Your first weeks: the essentials.

The stuff they don't put in the aliyah brochure — but really should.

01 Drink more water than you think

The heat here is no joke, especially June to September. Keep a reusable bottle on you at all times. Dehydration is a major trigger for anxiety and low mood — and you'll walk more than you're used to.

02 Sort your bank account in week one

Open a bank account as soon as you arrive. Hapoalim and Leumi have English-friendly branches. Without one, you can't get a SIM card, sign a lease, or receive your sal klita (absorption basket) payments.

03 Things run on Israeli time

Appointments are suggestions. Queues are optional. Nothing starts exactly on time and nobody seems to mind. Fighting it will exhaust you. Joining it will liberate you.

04 Ulpan is worth every hour

Even basic Hebrew transforms daily life. You don't need to be fluent — just being able to read signs and handle simple interactions will make you feel enormously more confident and at home.

05 Protect your mental health from day one

Don't wait until you're struggling. The adjustment period is real and it's okay to talk to someone. Shemesh exists for exactly this, our English-speaking therapists who genuinely get it.

06 Get these apps immediately

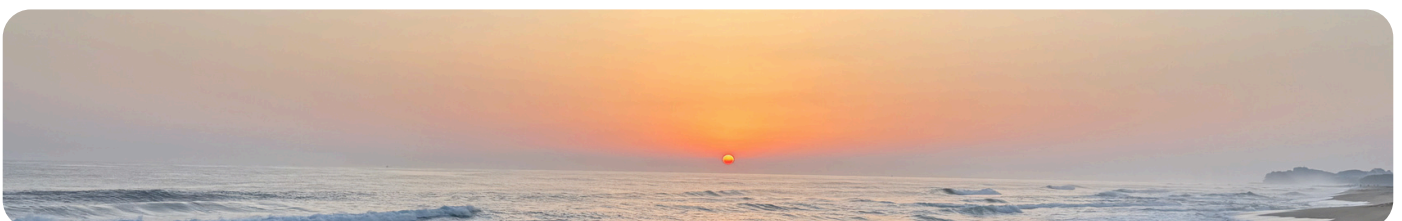
Waze (navigation), Wolt or 10bis (food delivery), Moovit (public transport), and Google Translate with Hebrew downloaded offline. They'll save you daily.

07 Say yes more than feels comfortable

You will be invited to things before you feel ready. Go anyway. One dinner invitation can completely change your social network within a week.

08 Find a morning ritual, fast

A sunrise beach walk, a coffee ritual, a yoga class — anchor your day to something that's yours. It creates stability when everything else feels new and unfamiliar.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

The Shemesh Community Calendar.

Community is medicine. These events are free, open to all Shemesh friends, and designed to get you out, moving, and genuinely connected.



First Thursdays — Monthly Meet-Ups

The first Thursday of every month · Tel Aviv

6:00 AM

Sunrise Coffee

6:00 AM

Sunrise Yoga Session

6:30 AM

Sunset Beach Run

8:00 AM

Dog Walk

10:00 AM

Stand-Up Paddle Session

11:00 AM

Breathwork Session

7:00 PM

Shemesh Sundowners Meet-Up

7:00 PM

Drumming Session



First Fridays — Shemesh Shabbat

The first Friday of every month · Members' Homes Across Tel Aviv

On the first Friday of every month, Shemesh community members open their homes and host Shabbat dinners — inviting other members to join their table. No experience needed. No pressure. Just good food, candles, and the kind of conversation that only happens when you sit down together.

Want to host a Shabbat dinner?

Sign up to the Shemesh community and let us know. We'll connect you with guests who'd love to come.



YOUR INSTAGRAM STARTER PACK

Follow these. Thank us later.

The fastest way to feel plugged in—culture, food, fellow Olim, and Hebrew made easy.

- **@cookingwithrami** Israeli food content that will make you fall in love with the cuisine all over again.
- **@yallabikes** Tel Aviv's favourite bike community. Best way to explore the city and meet people
- **@secrettelaviv** Hidden gems, new openings, and local favourites. Your guide to TA beyond the
- **@telaviv** The official TLV feed — events, culture, and the city looking its very best.
- **@olim.in.tlv** Fellow Olim in Tel Aviv sharing the real experience: the wins, the chaos, the
- **@hebrewwithlara** Lara makes Hebrew approachable and genuinely fun. Pick up a few words every
- **@jakey_parry** An Aussie who made aliyah and documents it honestly. Relatable, funny, and helpful.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Things people actually ask.

- Q **Is it normal to feel lonely even when I'm surrounded by people?**
Yes — social loneliness and emotional loneliness are two different things, and Olim often experience both simultaneously. It does get better, especially once you have a real community anchor.
- Q **How long does it actually take to feel settled?**
Most people feel genuinely at home somewhere between 6 and 18 months. The first three months are usually the hardest. Give yourself permission to still be figuring it out in year one — that's completely normal.
- Q **I don't speak Hebrew. Will I manage in Tel Aviv?**
Yes — Tel Aviv is very English-friendly. But learning even basic Hebrew will transform your confidence. Apps like Duolingo, Drops, or following @hebrewwithlara on Instagram are great starting points.
- Q **What does Shemesh actually offer?**
Remote therapy sessions in English with HPCSA-registered therapists who understand the Olim experience. We also run a growing community events programme. Visit shemesh-therapy.com to learn more and sign up.



Ready to feel at home here?

Join the Shemesh community.
We'll send you monthly events, tips,
and a gentle nudge when you need one.

[Sign Up. Join the Shemesh Community.](#)

Monthly Events

First Thursdays & First Fridays —
community you can actually feel.

English-Speaking Therapy

When you're ready, we're here.
No pressure.
No waitlists.

You're Not Alone

Thousands of English speakers

Visit www.shemeshwellness.com.

What you get when you join:

- Monthly invitations to First Thursdays events and First Fridays Shabbat dinners
- Community stories, practical tips, and honest advice from fellow English-speaking Olim
- Access to the Shemesh therapist network — when you're ready, we're ready
- A community that shows up for you, in the language you actually think in

"You didn't just
move country.
You came home."