

ISRAEL ROUNDUP

MEITZAD

A Look at the *Chareidi Yishuv*

Meitzad is a *chareidi yishuv* located 30 minutes south of Yerushalayim and about 25 minutes south of Beitar Illit. It is one of three *chareidi* towns located within the Gush Etzion Regional Council, the others being Beitar and Maale Amos.

Located at a high elevation, Meitzad has a pleasantly cool year-round climate. It also has a strikingly youthful character, with the average age of residents being about 30 years old.

Part of this has to do with the fact that apartments in Meitzad cost 30% to 40% less than similar apartments in Beit Shemesh, Beitar or Kiryat Sefer. It also has to do with the larger-sized apartments and tranquil, quiet atmosphere, ideal for raising a young family.

Some Background

Meitzad was established in the early 1980s by students and graduates of the Diaspora Yeshiva. The original residents went through years of real *mesirus nefesh* to keep the *yishuv* afloat. For decades it endured, but never experienced the growth its founders they had hoped for. In 2012, a group of serious *avreichim* from the Zilberman family of Yerushalayim's Old City decided to move in and build up the *yishuv*. At that point, Meitzad had 40 families.

Today, Meitzad is home to 150 mostly young Litvishe and Sephardi families, with another 50 moving into a new project within several months, *iy"H*. A second project for 200 families should be starting construction soon as well, with residency planned for three years from today. This newest project will have spacious 3-, 4- and 5-bedroom apartments ranging in price from NIS 1.3 million to NIS 2.2 million.

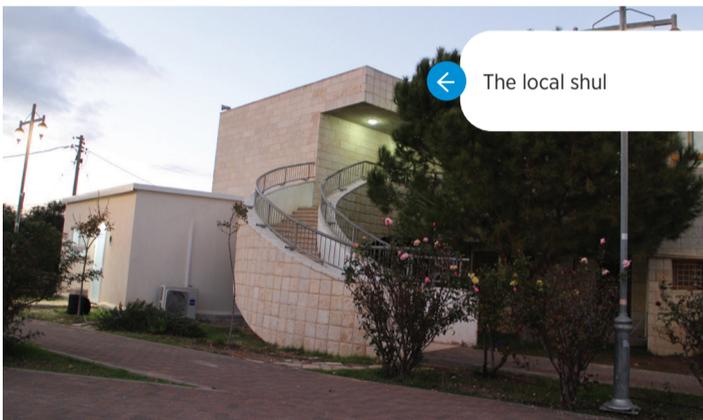
This, however, is just the beginning, says Shmuel Zilberman, resident and community leader in Meitzad.

"Meitzad will eventually become another Beitar. Meitzad's land allocation is actually around the same size as that of Beitar Illit — 4,000 dunam [1,000 acres], and it will eventually achieve the same level of growth in building, infrastructure, Torah institutions, and economics," he adds.

Facts on the ground indicate that Zilberman isn't the only resident with a sense of optimism



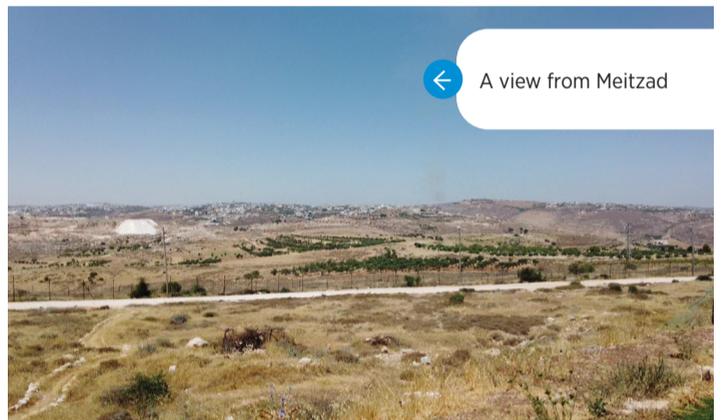
← Cheder boys seen in the local Talmud Torah



← The local shul



← Yosef Shalom Rabin, an American who made his home in Meitzad



← A view from Meitzad

about Meitzad's anticipated growth. In addition to the local grocery store (*makolet*), there is a pizza shop, a falafel shop and a shop that offers catered food for Shabbos. Of course, the 150 families currently living here are not enough to support all of these businesses, but the business owners aren't looking at the present, they're looking toward the future.

Chinuch

Ten years ago, when the *yishuv* had only nine *chinuch*-aged boys, Harav Aharon Yehuda Leib Steinman, *zt"l*, was asked if a *cheder* should be built in Meitzad, knowing that they had no chance of attaining government funding at that point. Previously, the children traveled daily to Har Tzion (just outside of the Old City of Yerushalayim) to learn in the *mosdos* of the Diaspora Yeshiva *kehillah*.

Rav Steinman told them to open, and so they did. Today there is a burgeoning *cheder* and a Bais Yaakov through the seventh grade. The small class sizes and warm, tight-knit atmosphere makes *chinuch* perhaps Meitzad's greatest asset. Many of the recent families that moved to Meitzad were encouraged to do so by Harav Chaim Kanievsky, *zt"l*, who also saw the potential

that Meitzad had to offer many young families.

About 10 years ago, a Litvishe yeshivah, Nachalas Yair, opened in Meitzad. Its *Rosh Yeshivah* is Harav Yitzchak Lupoliansky, son of Uri Lupoliansky, who served as mayor of Yerushalayim from 2003 to 2008. Some 60 *bachurim* learn there, and some have remained in Meitzad after getting married.

Parnassah

There is a mix of people who are learning and working on the *yishuv*. There are three *kollelim*. There are a variety of professionals including *Rebbis*, teachers, accountants, lawyers, high-tech, etc.

"Small towns offer the chance to run cottage industries, and aside from that, COVID showed us how many jobs can be done remotely," commented a resident of nearby Beitar.

People living in Meitzad seem to be doing as well as or better than those in other cities. A few reasons can be given for this: First, the cost of housing is much cheaper than in other more established *chareidi* areas. Second, since there are fewer shopping outlets and malls in the area, people are less likely to spend. People generally do their shopping through phone delivery service, the

local *makolet*, or supermarkets in Gush Etzion which are a 12-minute drive away. There is also a more modest atmosphere on the *yishuv* and less social pressure to spend beyond one's means. While public bus transportation makes it possible to live on the *yishuv* without a car, about 70% of the residents own a car because of the convenience.

Danger on the Road

One misconception about living in Yehudah and Shomron is that it is less safe. As was noted, there are stretches of road where Arab drivers outnumber Jewish ones. When asked if he was concerned about getting a flat tire while driving to Yerushalayim, Shmuel Zilberman replied: "Most likely the first Arab that drives by and sees you stuck will try to help you get back on the road. Their hospitality and helping someone in need is strangely not connected to their hatred of Jews. And any Israeli driver that sees you will stop right away. Plus, the army has a special hotline — 1208 — that any resident can call for any reason, which will summon the army within minutes. People that live here get used to the roads very quickly; they are not afraid to drive."

"We had been living in a *chareidi* city in the central

region," a Meitzad resident told *Hamodia*. "We had to leave and were considering various options. I discussed the options with Rav Chaim [Kanievsky], and one of them was Meitzad. This was about six years ago. He encouraged us to move to Meitzad. When I expressed fear at living in a far-off place with roads used mostly by Arabs, he didn't seem to weigh this as much of a factor, and gave us a *brachah* that we should be *matzliach* here. Today, years later, we feel that his *brachah* has accompanied us, and come to fruition."

"The media gives the false impression that life is unbearable, but this is a distortion," commented another resident. "If media coverage of Yerushalayim were to consolidate all the traffic accidents, protests, and violent activities there on a given day, one could easily come to the conclusion that life there is unbearable, but real life is very different from the headlines. Within Meitzad itself, many people do not feel a need to lock their doors. There is a protective fence, but over the last 37 years there were only three break-ins, none of them violent. While most residents

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