

Interview: Lorraine and Alan Sandler
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Interviewer: Lisa Newman
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(Lorraine)

And then one day our eldest son came to us and he said, “Mommy I want to go to a movie and I want Janet to come with me.” Janet was our housekeeper and nanny. She was a wonderful coloured lady who lived in the house, not out of the house as most South African servants did. I looked at Alan and we looked at one another and we realized that the day had come for us to deal with the fact that we were bringing our children up in apartheid state. As Jews we found this absolutely insufferable. We could not deal with it. We decided then and there that that was the time to start thinking about leaving. For me, going to Israel was the clear solution. Alan intimated that he would have to earn a living and that the language was a barrier for him. So we went on a reconnaissance trip and we went to many English-speaking countries. We took two months and we travelled and travelled.

(Interviewer)

To where? Where did you go?

(Lorraine)

We went to Israel. We went to London, England.

(Alan)

We landed in New York. Understood very quickly that this was not a place that we were going to be able to survive in because we didn't know how to survive in a city this size. This was a city that had a life of its own and was very exciting but we couldn't survive in it. We didn't know how. We flew to California in 1974. Jewish education was very unknown then as we knew Jewish education. Everything was up in the air, although it was the natural place to go to as a Cape Townian because San Diego is exactly like Cape Town. That was not a place to settle. We flew into Toronto.

(Lorraine)

We did the whole of the west coast and then we came to the east coast. When we got to Canada we knew one couple who had already arrived here. They invited us over and invited the Canadian friend that they had already met. I'm looking at my candle sticks because that is significant here. Shabbat candle sticks, an integral part of our life. This family asked us for Shabbat (Friday night dinner). Alan and I arrived and they and their four children were sitting in the kitchen preparing Shabbat dinner and the



Shabbat dinner in that house was exactly the same as the Shabbat dinner that we knew how to experience in our own homes. With the wallpaper, and the Shabbat candle sticks and the braided challah, beautiful *kiddish*. Alan and I looked at one another and we said “you know what, if Jewish life can flourish like we know it here, maybe this is a significant factor in us choosing to come here as well”. The fact that Alan had also had a wonderful interview with someone that had lasted all day. He and the spiller had really sort of found one another as common folk and he had offered to go at bat for us for immigration as well as to employ Alan. That together with that wonderful Shabbat dinner was a deciding factor for us. Quite simple actually.

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