

## FAQS FOR US LAWYERS MOVING TO ISRAEL

### **A. Requirements for Admission to the Israeli Bar Association**

In order to practice law in Israel, every lawyer must get admitted to the Israeli Bar Association. For foreign-educated lawyers such admission is a 4-step process.

#### 1. The Hebrew Exam and the Laws of Israel Exam

Before beginning the process of admission to the Israel Bar, every foreign-educated lawyer must pass a Hebrew language sufficiency exam and the Laws of Israel exam.

The Hebrew exam is offered four times a year (in January, April, August and October) and may require drafting a formal legal letter and a legal complaint as well as writing a short essay. Lawyers who have practiced for two years or more (since admission to a foreign Bar) may begin getting credit for their articulated clerkship as soon as they pass the Hebrew exam and may take the laws of Israel exam at any time during the clerkship. While those with fluent Hebrew may be tempted to waive out of the Hebrew exam, this is not recommended because those with waivers are required to write the Laws of Israel exam in Hebrew and will be judged together with Israelis returning from study of law abroad.

Before completing the articulated clerkship (and for lawyers with fewer than two years of experience before beginning their clerkship) every foreign educated lawyer must pass the Laws of Israel exams. These are a series of exams on nine different subjects of Israeli law. The exams are offered twice a year (in January and in August). They are open book format and the answers may be written in English.

### **2. Articled Clerkship**

Every candidate for admission to the Israel Bar must complete an articulated clerkship of up to 12 months. Experienced lawyers may apply to shorten the period of the clerkship to as little as 6 months. However, any dispensation given for a shorter clerkship is purely at the discretion of the staff at the Israel Bar Association and it is not always clear how they make their decisions. It is clear, however, that those who do their clerkships for well connected lawyers and law firms seem to have an easier time getting their clerkships shortened.

### **3. Israeli Bar Exam**

After completing their articulated clerkship, lawyers who have practiced law abroad for fewer than five years since their foreign admission must take the Israeli Bar exam. The Bar Exam is offered twice a year, in November and in May. It is the same exam given to all Israeli law school graduates, with the only special dispensation for olim being that they are allowed slightly more time to write the exam.

The Bar Exam has two parts. First, the written exam consists of a multiple choice and an essay portion. This exam covers the spectrum of Israeli law and is very detail oriented. A candidate who passes the written exam will be assigned a date for the oral exam. The oral exam consists of an appearance before a panel of three judges, including at least one lawyer from private practice and one judge. One complaint about the oral exam is that it is arbitrary and passing it depends on the mood and attitude of the judging panel.

#### **4. Admission Ceremony**

Those who have finished their articulated clerkships (for foreign lawyers with more than five years of foreign legal experience since their admission) and passed the Israeli Bar Exam (for all lawyers with less than five years of foreign legal experience) are invited to an induction ceremony in Jerusalem. This ceremony is held twice a year, in November and in June. In order to be formally admitted to the Israeli Bar Association, the candidate must be either a citizen of Israel or have an A-1 permanent resident visa. A candidate who is not a permanent resident may freeze his candidacy until he is ready to change his status (which need not concur timewise with the various induction ceremonies)

5. A lawyer who has been admitted to the Israeli Bar is entitled to practice law in any tribunal. There is no distinction made in Bar admissions for court lawyers and contract lawyers (as their would be in England, distinguishing between admission as a solicitor and admission as a barrister).

#### **B. How to prepare for the various legal exams**

There are a number of preparatory courses given.

1) In Jerusalem, Adv. David Saville offers a three week crash course before each administration of the Laws of Israel exams, to prepare olim for these exams, including for the Hebrew exam. The course is offered in English and is taught with an eye towards spending the minimum study time to achieve the maximum passing results.

2) A preparatory course for the Laws of Israel exams are offered in Hebrew in Tel Aviv. This course lasts eight weeks and is rumored to be far less useful.

3) Tel Aviv University offers a four month preparatory course for the final Bar Exam. This course is offered in Hebrew and is rumored to be of questionable help, especially for olim who are not completely fluent in Hebrew.

4) A private company called Machshavot has recently begun offering a Bar Preparation course in Hebrew. This course is rumored to be better than the one offered by Tel Aviv University, but it is also more expensive.

5) For several years a course in English has been offered in Jerusalem prior to the May administration of the final Bar Exam. One of the criticisms of this English course is that there is not enough Hebrew and, without a strong understanding of the Hebrew it is difficult to pass the multiple choice exam. Indeed, olim have a much higher fail rate on this exam than do native Israelis.