

CASE STUDY 22

Lenny

Lenny Ben-David lives in the group of Israeli settlements known as Gush Etzion, near the Palestinian town of Bethlehem in the West Bank. The population exceeds 70,000 people. There are about 600,000 Israelis living in over 200 settlements in the West Bank. For Israelis, it is easy to travel from these settlements to Jerusalem and beyond. Some settlers are motivated by a religious claim to the land, others more by economic benefits like cheap housing. Some are newcomers from countries like the USA, Russia, France or Ukraine. Settlements continue to grow. Fenced off and protected by soldiers, they often have separate roads and services from Palestinians.

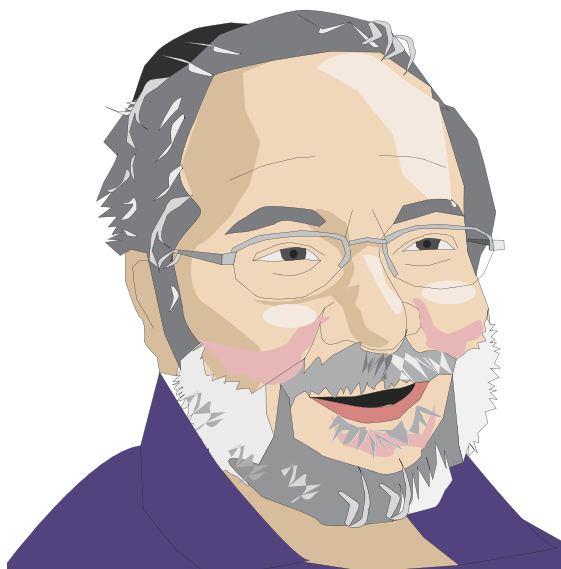


A sign for settlers heading into the rest of the West Bank. Photo: EAPPI/Hannah

Lenny shops regularly at the Rami Levy Supermarket, which is just outside the settlement, meaning it can be used by Palestinians and Israelis. Lenny feels he is connected with his neighbours, Jewish and Arab.

"I'm a local resident here and I shop here in Rami Levy. And I love shopping here because I also can rub elbows with my neighbours – Arabs from Hebron, maybe Muslim, or Christians from Bethlehem. There's coexistence here in that respect. You get to know these people and you have to say Merry Christmas to the Orthodox Christians in the right week, and 'Ramadan karim' to the Muslims, and 'Shabbat Shalom' to the others."

The staff at the supermarket are a mixture of Palestinians and Israelis.



Beitar Illit, the largest city in Gush Etzion.

"It's not well-covered by the press because it runs counter to the stereotype, and it hurts that this message isn't getting out there."

According to the *Haaretz* newspaper, right-wing Israeli groups and some locals have issued calls to boycott the shop, saying it was leading to inter-religious relationships.

Haaretz reported that, when a Jewish cashier and a Palestinian bagger became romantically involved, there was an outcry and the Palestinian was fired, although the manager denied this.

This case study is based on 'Meet the Settlers' from the *Daily Telegraph*. Watch a video of Lenny on the *Telegraph* website at www.telegraph.co.uk/meetthesettlers.