

Practicing Law in Israel

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For new immigrants to Israel ("Olim"), and for those planning to make Aliyah, the hope of living the Zionist dream sometimes clouds reality - once you land in Israel you will probably need to find a job. Many olim even imagine that their Aliyah is an opportunity for a career change, for a "fresh start" especially if they didn't love the job they left. My advice is that if you really need to work it's probably best to start looking for opportunities in the field that you practiced abroad.

If you were trained as a lawyer abroad, your options for practicing as a lawyer in Israel include: 1) working in an Israeli law firm, 2) becoming a legal advisor for a company or governmental office, or 3) trying to get your employer from abroad to keep you as a telecommuting employee.

There are also other options worth exploring besides practicing law, such as jobs that touch on the law but don't require a local law license. These could include: contract manager, director of compliance, patent attorneys, IP management, legal marketing, legal secretaries and paralegals. **However, for the purpose of this article I have limited myself to jobs that require a legal education and a law license.**

The Market Place:

Practicing law in Israel can be similar to your practice abroad, however, depending on your area of expertise, it can also be completely different. No matter what, there are many practical and cultural differences that are important to know before making the transition.

The law market in Israel is divided into international and local practice areas, and one can practice law in either law firms or companies.

A "*local practice*" refers to positions that deal almost exclusively with local transactions and issues of Israeli law, no matter where the client is based. From a law firm perspective, this includes, *inter alia*, Labor Law, Family Law, Property Law, Commercial Contracts, Income Tax, Criminal Law, Local Regulatory Laws and Civil/Commercial Litigation. Local specializations are usually found in law firms, but can be practiced in companies as well. For example, companies often hire lawyers to deal with local issues such as Contracts Law, Property, Labor Law, Insurance

Law, Banking and Regulatory Law in areas such as Israeli Securities, Telecom, etc.

Remember that the practice may still be local even if the clients are not. So, for example, a global computer company might hire a local lawyer to advise on issues affecting their local office and trade in Israel. They want their lawyer to handle property contracts, advise on local labor issues, negotiate insurance contracts etc. For all of these “local” practice areas, the emphasis is on Israeli law and lawyers are expected to have a deep understanding of the relevant Israeli law as well as a high level of written and spoken Hebrew. Global companies will also expect a high level of fluency in English so that you can communicate with the managers abroad, but the English is secondary.

An “*international practice*” refers to positions that deal with international transactions and focuses primarily on Israeli companies with subsidiaries abroad or that export from Israel, or companies from abroad that are investing or doing business within Israel. Such companies include technology companies as well as food and clothing manufacturers. But it also includes companies that invest abroad, such as property development companies, and public companies that are listed -- or want to be listed -- on foreign stock exchanges and thus require advice on foreign regulatory compliance. The areas of expertise that are generally sought are Capital Markets, Mergers & Acquisitions, Software Licensing and Distribution Transactions, International Property Transactions, International Labor Law, International Tax, International Regulatory Compliance such as the European GDPR, etc.

Many full service Israeli law firms hire foreign licensed English speaking lawyers because of their foreign practice experience. These foreign licensed lawyers represent international clients who are investing or doing transactions in Israel, or they represent Israeli companies that are investing or doing transactions abroad. Usually, the international lawyer has a basic knowledge of the relevant Israeli laws, but in large firms s/he works together with the firm’s Israeli lawyers who are experts in the local laws, thus relieving the foreign lawyer of having to be experts on Israeli law – at least initially. [See below for a full discussion of how a foreign licensed lawyer can qualify with the Israel Bar Association in order to practice law while based in Israel.]

For a list of Israeli law firms: [The Legal 500: Europe, Middle East & Africa > Israel](#)

How Important is Hebrew?

Excellent Hebrew skills are essential for those who want to practice local law. Good Hebrew is also recommended for those with an international practice, but it is not essential. Excellent Hebrew means the ability to understand and participate meaningfully in a business meeting in Hebrew, and to write in Hebrew without mistakes. The more your foreign experience is needed for the position you apply for, the less stringent employers will be about your Hebrew.

Unfortunately, Olim are not always prepared for the fact that many of the laws in Israel are completely different from what they are used to, and that in local practice areas there is often little use for English. Lawyers who come from litigation, Insurance, Family Law, Property Law and Criminal law backgrounds may have a hard time finding work. Therefore, someone who wants to continue practicing any kind of litigation will have to be fluent in both written and spoken Hebrew.

For international practice areas, English is usually the main language required for drafting and it is required at a native level. The largest firms and big international companies often hire English speakers who are not yet fluent in Hebrew, as long as they have experience in relevant practice areas (US Securities, private equity, software licensing, etc.). However, as a general rule, the default language for informal communications within law firms and companies is Hebrew and employers always prefer to hire someone who can also communicate orally in Hebrew.

The competition for these select international positions is fierce. Besides other Olim who come with stellar credentials, many Israelis are admitted to practice law in foreign jurisdictions (predominantly New York) or have spent a year getting an advanced degree in American universities, which then entitled them to work abroad. When an Israeli lawyer returns from several years practicing in leading law firms abroad they have gained relevant international corporate experience and excellent English drafting skills. Employers often prefer these "returning Israelis" over native English speakers because they can communicate better with their Israeli clients in Hebrew. Others prefer the native English speaker because their English writing skills will always be better. A lot depends on whether the person hiring is himself/herself a native English speaker. However, in deciding between a pure English speaker with no relevant corporate experience and an Israeli with excellent English and relevant corporate experience, they will always hire the Israeli.

Practicing in a Local Israeli Law Firm

While the bulk of Israeli law firms still have fewer than 5 lawyers, those firms for the most part practice Civil-Commercial law, with an emphasis on local practice areas and particularly representing small businesses and individuals in litigation and property transactions. However, as many of the Israeli companies have expanded over the years, been acquired by foreign entities or listed themselves in foreign locations, the leading Israeli law firms have grown substantially. Large firms by Israeli standards are multi-departmental firms with between 90–150 lawyers and mid-sized is generally from 20-90 lawyers. Firms with fewer than 20 lawyers are considered small. There are also several "mega firms" with 200 - 400 lawyers, most of which were formed from mergers with smaller firms. There are also quite a few boutique firms, generally small or medium-sized, that limit their practice areas to one or two specialties that complement one another. A boutique law firm is usually considered competitive quality-wise with the larger firms in that particular area of practice. For instance, there are boutique firms that specialize in high tech, property, criminal litigation, personal injury, etc. A boutique high tech firm will usually handle the same kind of case load as the high tech department in a large multi-departmental firm and will be competitive in terms of salaries and hours. However, a boutique firm often cannot offer its clients additional services such as litigation representation or tax planning, and big international clients with a need for several levels of expertise, may not want to go shopping around for each of their lawyers.

As a general rule, only the large, mega and boutique international and high tech law firms can afford to hire lawyers who don't write and speak fluently in Hebrew. They model themselves after the much larger US and UK firms that are compartmentalized by practice areas. Here, the international work is located in one or several international departments and thus it is easier for a pure English speaker to find enough work to keep busy. In contrast, the smaller firms often train their lawyers to provide full service to clients, so both Hebrew and English are necessary. The large firms can be very good places to begin one's career in Israel because they cater to a diverse type of clientele and can give a new Oleh an overview of the local business law market.

On the other hand, if you are fluent in Hebrew then a medium sized or small law firm can be an interesting option. While such firms may not have the same size or breadth of clientele, they generally have a few top tier clients who can give a new lawyer top level experience. Whereas in a larger firm you will be working exclusively in English, and thus not learning much Hebrew or local law, working in smaller and mid-sized firms offers an

opportunity to learn and practice Israeli law as well. Finally, lawyers who distinguish themselves in medium and smaller firms may have more opportunity to bring in clients (because the rates are lower), which is helpful in these firms in order to become a partner. Unfortunately, many medium-sized and small law firms don't have enough English work to keep an English speaker busy doing meaningful work 100% of the time. Thus, those that hire English speakers often give them tedious translation work and other non-legal assignments to take advantage of their English skills.

Boutique law firms are an exception to the big firm/ small firm dichotomy. These firms specialize specifically in representing foreign clients, such as high tech companies, so all of the lawyers are doing work that is only in English. For these firms, like the largest full service firms, Hebrew is an asset but it is not always essential and there is no need to draft in Hebrew. Prior relevant experience, however, is always a necessity here because these firms do not always have the size and funds to train lawyers without experience in the specific field of practice.

Practicing in a Company

The kinds of companies that are interested in English speaking lawyers are generally large global companies that are listed on a foreign stock exchange or Israeli companies whose sales markets are primarily outside of Israel. These include technology companies that sell and license technology abroad, international property investment and building companies, high tech companies, companies listed on foreign stock exchanges that report to foreign investors and submit reports to foreign stock exchanges, and the international departments of banks. More recently, the Israeli market has been inundated with internet companies that deal with internet gambling, internet games and foreign exchanges (forex).

Simply knowing English for these jobs is essential, but not enough. Relevant candidates must be thoroughly familiar with the types of deals that the companies need to sell or license their products.

Depending on the company, the range of in-house positions for lawyers can include:

- *General Counsel* for a legal department. This is generally not a position for which companies hire new olim since they want someone who is already licensed as an Israeli lawyer.

- *Legal Counsel* in a company legal department. These positions are periodically available to olim. Usually they require at least four years of top level commercial contract experience. Technology companies generally insist on experience with software licensing and distribution agreements.
- *Solo counsel* for smaller companies. This position can be very interesting because it allows a lawyer to be involved in every aspect of the business. Usually, the lawyer must be licensed in Israel and speak a fairly high level of Hebrew. These positions sometimes include work in M&A and international Securities, since the lawyer acts as a manager of outside counsel.
- Contract Manager for large, global companies. Many of the companies that build and implement large, complex systems for overseas companies or governments hire contract managers with a legal background. The Contract Manager does not draft or negotiate the primary framework agreements, but since there are any subcontracts involved, the Contract Manager follows the implementation of the larger contract and negotiates all the smaller subcontracts. *Note: this position does not necessarily require a licensed lawyer but companies often prefer lawyers for the position because they are trained negotiators.
- Regulatory Law is fast becoming an important area of practice in both companies and law firms and new area where Olim have an advantage because of their language skills and relevant experience abroad. The recent inundation of global laws surrounding data privacy, such as the European GDPR as well as the comparable U.S. and Israeli laws, are far reaching regulations that apply to any company doing business in these jurisdictions. The data privacy laws join a myriad of other international regulations such as KYC, AML, IRS, SEC, FATCA, etc., with significant civil and even criminal penalties for not complying with the laws.

Compliance Manager within companies is similar to Regulatory Law in its demand for a high level of English to ascertain compliance with relevant international specifications.

Government and Quasi-Governmental Positions

The Israeli Foreign Ministry regularly hires English speaking interns, and sometimes offers them permanent positions. Some quasi-governmental

companies, such as defense-related manufacturers (Israel Aircraft Industries, Rafael, Elta), hire English speaking lawyers to draft and negotiate their complex agreements for sales around the world (often in countries that no one will admit we do business with). For those who would like to volunteer for the IDF and complete their national army service, there may also be opportunities in the Legal Department of the army.

The Supreme Court of Israel also regularly hires young English speaking Olim with outstanding foreign academic credentials to work as Foreign Specialists assisting the judges with international legal research.

Working for a Foreign Law Firm

Some lawyers who make Aliyah have been lucky enough to maintain formal ties with their foreign employers, allowing them to continue working for the firm from Israel and earning a foreign salary. However, complaints about these positions include:

1. The nature of the work is "back room" without any client interface, and therefore tends to be more tedious.
 2. There is no real opportunity to become a partner in the foreign law firm because you operate alone and there is no personal interaction with most of the partnership.
 3. When the foreign law firm makes cuts, the telecommuting associate is often the first to go.
 4. There may be some legal and regulatory hurdles that the foreign law firm is exposed to, which makes them wary to take on such an associate.
- Outsourcing Firms - Innodata and City Book operate as the back office for property companies in the US. The work is document intensive, mostly doing property lease summaries and due diligence. These companies generally hire on a daily or project basis, rather than full time, so the salary is also less predictable.
 - Schwell, Wimpfheimer, Aranoff, formerly Outside Counsel Solutions (OCS), is a full service foreign law firm that is based entirely in Israel. Practicing only foreign law, it has Corporate, Labor Law, IP, US Securities and US Litigation departments, most of the clients are foreign companies that are interested in the lower rates because they're based in Israel. There are also Israeli clients who confer with the lawyers about foreign legal

issues.

- Foreign Litigation Firms –There are currently two firms – one in Jerusalem and one in Tel Aviv -- that practice exclusively foreign litigation and hire American-trained or UK-trained litigation associates to do their legal research and writing.
- Branch offices of foreign law firms.

There are a number of Israeli branch offices of foreign law firms that operate in Israel. But they claim to be purely marketing and business development purposes with no legal work actually being practiced in Israel. These offices are generally set up by a successful partner who wants to live in Israel for personal reason and they don't usually hire local lawyers. They include:

- Berwin Leighton – UK based firm
- DLA Piper – Global firm, headquarters in US
- Freshfields – Global firm, headquarters in UK
- Mintz Levin – USA based firm
- Lathan & Watkins – Global firm, headquarters in US

However, several U.S. firms have decided to use the new law to test the waters of actually practicing purely foreign law from Israel, and thus taking advantage of the significantly lower wages paid in Israel for Olim who were well-trained abroad. Firms that operate such a foreign practice generally will only hire lawyers with a foreign license, and many require anyone with a local Israeli license to freeze it so that there will be no question about whether these lawyers are also practicing Israeli law.

Foreign firms operating in Israel include:

- Greenberg Traurig – a USA-based global firm with a 12-15 lawyer office in Tel Aviv
- Zysman Aharoni Gayer has foreign affiliates in the US (Sullivan & Worcester) and in China
- Pearl Cohen Tzeddek has a foreign affiliate from the U.S.

License to Practice Law in Israel

In order for a foreign-trained lawyer to practice Israeli law in Israel s/he must relicense as an Israeli lawyer with the Israel Bar Association.

Israeli law firms prefer hiring Olim who go through the process of relicensing as an Israeli lawyer rather than hiring Foreign Licensed Lawyers who are limited to practicing the law of the jurisdiction where they came from. While there have been sporadic cases of a local law firm actually offering partnership to a Foreign Licensed Lawyer who had not relicensed as an Israeli attorney, because they needed his foreign specialty and had enough work to keep him busy, I recommend going through the relicensing process. This both because it allows you to learn Israeli law and Hebrew, and because it gives you more mobility in the future if you want to leave your first job.

1. Relicensing as an Israeli lawyer is a four or five step process:

- i. Hebrew Proficiency Exam – In order to qualify for the rest of the requalification process, foreign lawyers must take a basic Hebrew exam that tests their ability to read and write a legal document in Hebrew. **Foreign-licensed lawyer with at least two years of foreign experience may begin the legal internship after passing this exam, even before they pass all the Law of Israel exams.** A candidate may be exempt from this requirement if s/he opts to write, and passes, each of the Laws of Israel Exams in Hebrew.
- ii. Law of Israel Exams – Every foreign trained lawyer must pass a battery of eight tests on a variety of subjects in Israeli law: Property, Constitutional Law, Civil Procedure, Family Law, Torts/Contracts/Labor Law, Criminal Law, Corporate, Tax + Bankruptcy Law. **These exams are given twice a year and the Bar Association offers a three week preparatory course in English for a fee.** The Ministry of Absorption may subsidize this fee and help connect a candidate with other preparatory courses.
- iii. Legal Internship – Every foreign trained lawyer must work for a period of time under the tutelage of a lawyer who has been admitted to practice in Israel for at least five years. The official internship period for Israeli law students that began law school after August 7, 2017, was recently extended from one year to 18 months. [Note: It is not clear how this will impact a foreigner that started law school long before August 7, 2017 and is starting their

internship now or in the future.] **The Bar Association may reduce the length of the internship for very experienced foreign lawyers as it chooses, but never to less than six months.**

iv. The Israel Bar Exam - At the end of the Internship, foreign licensed lawyers with fewer than five years of experience must take the same Bar Exam that Israeli law students take at the end of their internship.

1. **Foreign lawyers who received their law license more than five years before the date of aliyah are exempt from these exams. This path is highly recommended given the current state of the Bar Exam as described below.**

[Note: the date that the Israel Bar Association uses to determine how many years of practice a lawyer has in a foreign jurisdiction is based on when the lawyer was admitted to a foreign bar association and not when s/he began actually practicing law. Therefore, lawyers from states like New York cannot count their months of experience before being officially sworn in as licensed lawyers.]

2. The Bar Exam is a purely Hebrew exam comprised of three sections: (1) a written section, (2) a procedural law multiple choice section, and (3) a substantive law multiple choice section. The written section is a new addition to the bar exam format and specifically tests an examinee's ability to draft a Hebrew language court pleading, commercial contract, lease or any other related legal document that the Board of Examiners so chooses.

3. Note: Olim are given additional time to complete the entire exam. Also, while the written section is probably the most daunting section of the exam for Olim, it represents only 15% of the overall score for the exam, and only a few points within that 15% are devoted to scoring a candidate's written abilities (as opposed to the content of their submission).

4. Note: The Israel Bar Exam has undergone a number of significant changes in recent years, all of which have made the current exam much harder both for native Israelis and even more so for Olim, who are not native Hebrew speakers. This is reflected in the overall pass rate for Israelis of 35% (as opposed

to the prior pass rate of 70-80%). Unfortunately, the current pass rate for new Olim stands at approximately 2%. As a result, there have been appeals and angry public exchanges between an organized group of legal interns with the Israel Bar Association and the Ministry of Justice. So far this has resulted in the Bar Association allowing interns who missed the passing score by up to 10 points to take another test, which many of them passed. The general feeling within the Israeli legal community is that the current exam is subject to change – both with respect to the exam's format as well as the passing score.

5. Regardless of the results of the above dispute, it is clear that excellent Hebrew is essential for passing this exam. In December of 2018, only 28% of Olim (this includes individuals who made Aliyah as children and have had extended time to assimilate and learn Hebrew) passed on their first attempt, and of examinees that studied law abroad only 2% passed.

Practicing as a Foreign-Licensed Lawyer

In 2012 the Israel Bar Association adopted regulations allowing foreign-licensed lawyers and foreign law firms to practice foreign law in Israel. Under the new regulations, a foreign licensed lawyer who has practiced law abroad does not have to relicense as an Israeli lawyer **but is limited to providing legal opinions and counseling exclusively regarding the laws of the country in which that lawyer was licensed, and drafting legal documents for which only foreign law applies.**

A Foreign Licensed Lawyer is not required to satisfy the Israel Bar Association's requirements for admission to the Israeli Bar and is exempt from sitting for the Law of Israel exams and for the Israel Bar Exam.

The main purpose of the law, presumably, is to allow a experts from a foreign jurisdiction to market themselves and advise local Israeli clients on foreign law. To ensure that foreign licensed lawyers do not abuse this unique status, the regulations require absolute transparency, and specifically require that a foreign licensed lawyer disclose his or her status to all potential clients, law firm letterhead, etc. [Warning: There have been incidents of Foreign Licensed Lawyers being penalized for advertising themselves as Israeli lawyers when in fact they had only the Foreign

Licensed Lawyer status.]

As a result of this new regulation, several foreign law firms have opened small offices in Israel where they do mostly marketing of their foreign offices but they also advise on non-Israeli law to Israeli clients. These offices are listed on the Foreign Law Firm Registry. The Bar Association permits branch offices to employ only lawyers who are admitted to the IBA, either as a Foreign Licensed Lawyer or as an Israeli licensed lawyer

In order to be eligible as a Foreign Licensed Lawyer, one must:

- i. Make a formal request to the Israel Bar Association to be listed in the Foreign Lawyers Registration and pay an annual fee.
- ii. Submit the following documents:
 - a. Confirmation that the Applicant holds a valid foreign law license.
 - b. Proof that the Applicant practiced the specified foreign law for at least five (5) years immediately prior to submitting the application.
 - c. A declaration by the Applicant and a confirmation from an official representative regarding the Applicant's criminal past.
- iii. Pass an Ethics Exam administered by the Israel Bar Association.
- iv. Maintain Professional Liability Insurance compliant with the requirements of the Israel Bar Association.

Salaries

Salaries in Israel are quoted on a monthly basis in shekel and are offered in pre-tax ("bruto") terms. Everyone expects that salaries in Israel will not be what they were abroad; yet everyone is still surprised by how low the salaries here turn out to be. As a rule of thumb, a highly skilled corporate or securities international lawyer who was trained in a top US law firm, can expect to find a job in a top Tel Aviv law firm and earn in shekel the number that s/he made in the US in dollars. However, if the experience isn't entirely applicable, or if the lawyer is very very senior, then those numbers will drop significantly.

Salaries for law firms with 10+ lawyers will generally be in the following range:

- Entry Level (no legal experience doing an internship): 8,000-10,000 NIS
- Newly licensed/Junior : 11,000 – 14,000 NIS
- Mid- level: 14,000 – 20,000 NIS
- Senior level: 20,000 – 35,000 NIS

In private companies, legal counsel salaries range as follows:

- Junior legal counsel (1-3 yrs experience):
 - Private non-tech companies: 10,000 – 12,000 NIS
 - Technology/Internet/global companies: 12,000 – 16,000 NIS
- Mid-level counsel (4–7 yrs experience)
 - Private non-tech companies: 14,000 – 18,000 NIS
 - Technology/Internet/global companies: 16,000 – 30,000 NIS
- Senior legal counsel (8-15 years but not head of department)
 - Private non-tech companies: 15,000 – 25,000 NIS
 - Technology/Internet/global companies: 25,000 – 40,000 NIS
- General Counsel (8+ years, head of a department managing lawyers)
 - Private non-tech companies: 25,000 – 40,000 NIS
 - Technology/Internet/global companies: 40,000 – 60,000 NIS

Government and Quasi-Governmental companies, as well as banks and insurance companies generally pay on the lower side of the scale, with the range as follows:

- Junior legal counsel (1-3 yrs experience): 8,000 – 11,000 NIS
- Mid-level counsel (4–7 yrs experience): 10,000 – 16,000 NIS
- Senior legal counsel (8+ years): 15,000 – 27,000 NIS
- General Counsel (head of a department): 35,000+ NIS

Most law firms give a yearly bonus of 1-2 months salary per year, and increase the base salary in January by anywhere from 500 -2000 NIS. Therefore, salaries can increase significantly as a lawyer gains experience and can reach US level (smaller firm) levels once a person makes partner. Some firms will also pay lawyers a percentage of new business revenues (usually between 15%-25%) for clients that lawyer introduced to the firm.

In addition, companies often offer cars or the cost of a car, technology companies will give options to their more senior employees and banks/ insurance companies and governmental companies usually have other fringe benefits like providing lunch at a central cafeteria and offering special discounts for vacations, children's after school and summer camps, continuing education, etc.

Work Hours

The standard Israeli work week is five days a week, Sunday through Thursday, 9 hours per day. However, most jobs hire lawyer level employees on a "global basis" which means that they pay a monthly salary no matter how many hours are actually worked, and usually that number is well beyond the minimum requirement of 40 hours per week for a full time position.

Most people who make aliyah assume that they will give up the big firm salaries in exchange for a better quality of life here in Israel. While everything is relative, and the biggest and busiest NY law firms still seem to work much harder than the Tel Aviv firms, the standard for Tel Aviv firms is still very intense.

The good news for Olim who are Sabbath observant is that the work week in private industry is officially from Sunday through Thursday, and Jewish holidays are official days off with the day before the holiday as a half day. Chol Hamoed, on Sukkot and Passover, are also officially half days at work, although many firms give the entire week as a paid vacation.

In large international law firms, work days begin between 9 - 9:30 am and end around 8 pm. However, many international deals – such as merger transactions, investment rounds that needs to close, securities reporting by the end of the quarter or a license deal that must finish – require frequent late nights either in the office or from your laptop at home. Work in these firms from 9 am to 10 pm is not uncommon.

For those who work in international companies, frequent travel is a given. On complex deals for foreign clients, most deals are closed by the in-house lawyer traveling with the business manager in the company to wherever the client is based in order to close the deal. In some companies travel may be as often as 1 trip of 2-4 days every 3 weeks.

Government companies and local Israeli companies, such as banks and insurance companies, have recently joined private industry and lawyers generally work a five day work week, usually 8/9 am – 5/6 pm.

Mothers in Israel generally try to work until 4 pm so that they can pick up their children from daycare (which usually closes by 5). It would be a lie to say that employers are happy about this. Some employers will accommodate mothers but require them to work two long days (when the

father or mother-in-law picks up the kids). Many expect mothers to finish at home what they did not finish during the day at work and also to log into their email from home to see if new things arose after they left the office. Also, if meetings take place after 4, many employers will want mothers to be flexible about emergency childcare. In recent years there has been significant rise in the percentage of women in the law firms as well as a rise in men who are demanding equal treatment for "parenting". As a result, many of the leading firms are offering ALL THEIR ATTORNEYS the right to leave work at 3pm one day each week, or in the alternative to work from home one day a week.

For English speaking mothers, law firms are often a better place to work than companies because their size and depth allows them to accommodate working mothers' hours. In either case, as a general rule I recommend trying to find a job as a full time employee and then suggesting reduced hours once you've gained your employer's trust.

Finally, mothers' "reduced" hours-- even if they end up working many hours from home and are more efficient than their male counterparts-- often are an excuse for employers to pay women significantly less than men and not to promote them as quickly. It will be interesting to see how the increased demands by fathers will affect the promotion of mothers in the firms.

When should you make aliyah?

Many non-Hebrew speaking foreign lawyers wait until they had been licensed for at least five years in a foreign jurisdiction before moving to Israel, especially if they are close and already have more than 3½ years of experience. Traditionally this was in order to avoid having to take the Israel Bar Exam at the end of the internship period. Now, with the Foreign Licensed Lawyer option, there is also a five year minimum in order to qualify as a foreign expert. Waiting for at least five years works best for those who are already practicing in an area that they can continue practicing in Israeli firms or companies. In addition to avoiding taking the Bar, those extra years of experience can be beneficial for making contacts that will want to send you business in Israel and saving money in order to afford the cut in salary.

For those who cannot continue to practice the same area of law as they practiced abroad, I would recommend coming with no more than two years of experience (preferably in some kind of contract law). The reasons for this are:

1. The shock of the salary cut will be easier to take when the salary you are leaving is lower,
2. In order to get ahead you're going to have to learn Hebrew so you might as well start learning it sooner rather than later,
3. If you need to learn a new area of practice, firms will be more willing to take on a junior lawyer than they will to take someone who has practiced for many years.

I would also strongly recommend coming before the age of 40. Israelis are not allowed to discriminate by age, but they do.

Where should you live?

The biggest international law firms are based mostly in the Tel Aviv/ Ramat Gan area. Companies are often located outside of the bigger cities and can be found along the Tel Aviv – Haifa corridor (Tel Aviv, Herzliya, Netanya, Caesarea, Haifa), in the Sharon Area (Kfar Sava, Raanana and just south of Tel Aviv (Rehovot, Rishon L'Zion, Holon).

Most of the jobs in law for English speakers are in law firms located in the Tel Aviv area, with a small oasis of relevant positions also in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, housing that is in or close to Tel Aviv or Jerusalem is extremely expensive. Areas like Binyamina and Herzliya that are North of Tel Aviv, Holon and Rishon that are South and Modiin and Bet Shemesh heading towards Jerusalem are more affordable, and there is a convenient train from all of them to Tel Aviv. Cities that are close to Road #6 Cross Israel Highway (i.e. areas near Ashdod, Gedera, Kfar Saba etc.) also cut travel time significantly and are possible places to live outside of the big cities but they require a car.

There are also companies located in different "high tech parks" throughout the country, from Beersheba in the South, to Jerusalem, Rehovot, Raanana, Herzliya, Yokneam, Haifa and more. These are always worth exploring, however jobs in these companies' legal departments are few and far between. Therefore, you will have the most options and growth opportunities if you live in the Center or Sharon areas of the country.

In Summary

6. Excellent Hebrew is important, for litigators it is essential. This has become increasingly important with the changes to the Israel Bar Exam.
7. Top level relevant experience is essential – just having good English skills will not be sufficient.
8. You can work in a law firm, a company or a government agency.
9. Contract drafting, US Securities Law and Technology Agreements are the most useful experience.
10. Salaries are about ¼ of US salaries.
11. Working hours can be long and often there is a lot of overseas travel required.
12. Relicensing as an Israeli lawyer is encouraged.
13. Most international jobs are located in the Central and Sharon areas.
14. Try to come before age 40.