

SINCE 1976

# maoz israel

REPORT



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What it looks like when you:

# Rescue, Strengthen and Restore

By Shani Sorko-Ram Ferguson

Today Israel is a country where most of the population have lived in the land for less than a generation. While you've likely had to pack up and move from one place to another in your lifetime, many Jewish immigrants have had to fit their entire life into a suitcase when they made Aliyah. They've then had to learn a new culture, and a new language—and often an entirely new trade. Some do all this with young kids in tow.

Their stories are both heart-wrenching and inspiring. But most of all, they are full of

evidence that God is watching carefully and moving the pieces of our lives this way and that to bring even the most broken people into His fold.

We love sharing **IStandwithIsrael** stories.\* We hope they encourage you that your involvement with Maoz, however big or small, changes real-life situations from desperate lives to thankful lives. When the believers are strong in Israel, their lives are a testimony to God's willingness and ability to take care of His own—and that is a powerful invitation in Israel to those who are not yet of His Kingdom.

\* Israel is a small country and some of these stories share sensitive information, Therefore, some of the names and one photo have been changed to protect the families' privacy.

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## RESTORE

# Mehret

I was ten when my father brought my brothers and I to Israel from Ethiopia. The country plugged us into the immigration system, so I learned Hebrew and then went to school. I finished high school and just like every Israeli, went straight

into the army. They drafted me into an intelligence-gathering combat unit and I was happy to be serving my country.

I learned from an early age that hard work was the way to get ahead, so as soon as I completed my army service, I immediately got a job. I was living the life I wanted and everything was going great. Then at the age of 25, I gave birth to a beautiful boy into the world. I thought his father was as committed to building a family as I was, but soon after our second son arrived, he left us.

I kept working but everything I earned went to cover expenses for my two boys. Then their father went to prison, and the little help he could offer went with him. When I couldn't cover the rent, social services tried to step in and help, but their processes were very complicated, and only made things harder for me. My deficit in the bank was only growing and I became depressed and started drinking heavily. **It wasn't until the social worker took my boys from me that I realized how low I had fallen and that I would do anything to get them back.**

I went into Beth Yeshua rehab and there I got cleaned up from alcohol—and cleansed of my sin! The social workers saw the change in me and within eight months, they gave me my boys back. I have walked with the Lord and been a part of a congregation ever since. That was three years ago!

Still, while my past was washed clean before the Lord, it was not washed clean before the banks. I owed so much—with years of interest. Then my counselors from the rehab told me about **IStandwithIsrael** and helped me apply. I am so thankful ISWI helped me with my debt and with counsel, so that I will be able to manage our lives going forward. I am forever thankful. **God has truly restored my life in every way.** ●



STRENGTHEN

# Oxana & Andrei

It was 1997 and our lives were a mess. My husband, Andrei and I had just welcomed our first child into the world when Andrei was arrested and put in prison. It was a difficult time for me physically and emotionally. One day I saw a show about Yeshua on TV and gave my life to the Lord. Almost immediately things started to change for me. I joined a congregation and grew strong in my relationship with God. Then I started having the strangest urge to move to Israel. My mother and I prayed about it and our congregation leaders agreed this was from the Lord. So, I made Aliyah with my mother and our 5-year-old son. However, I refused to give up on my husband. I prayed so hard for him during his time in prison.

Within a year, Andrei also received the Lord; six months after that he was released from prison in Ukraine and we were reunited in Israel. Here, we had two more children. Today, our whole family walks with the Lord and we have served in Melech Hakavod (King of Glory) congregation since the first day we arrived in Israel.

The most difficult part of living in Israel is housing. Finding a place that works for our family, packing and unpacking, dealing with problematic landlords—these things can consume your life. Because rent prices can go up and down dramatically from year to year, we moved often. Today our son is married, our oldest daughter is beginning college, and our younger daughter is doing her military service in a combat unit.

With our kids out of the house, my husband and I looked to see if there was any way we could afford to buy a small apartment so we wouldn't have to keep moving every few years as we grew older. No middle-class family in Israel can afford the real-estate market prices, so the government has instituted rules where a certain percentage of newly-built apartments must be sold at a discounted rate. We were beyond happy when we found out we qualified for one of them.

But, like many things in Israel, life didn't go as planned. After we signed, the construction was delayed for three years—so we had to pay on the mortgage and rent a place to live at the same time if we wanted



to keep the apartment.

It was a stretch, but we knew it would be our only chance to ever own our own home.

We were only two months away from the final large payment that was due upon receiving the keys, when I was let go from my job. This happened just as the COVID-19 crisis shook the market. I was so discouraged to have come such a long way and lose at the finish line. I knew there was no way we could come up with that kind of money in such a short period of time. But I prayed anyway, because that is what I have always done.

Some people in my congregation heard about our situation and told us about the **IStandwithIsrael** fund that helps believers in the land who are in need. Our hopes rose and we sent in the application. **When we received the notification that ISWI had approved our request we cried like babies at God's faithfulness. He brought us home to Israel and then gave us a home in Israel.**

Thank you to the ISWI team, thank you Maoz, thank you for the generous hearts of your donors who give to believers in Israel they have never met. May He richly bless you and strengthen you as He has strengthened us. ●



Credit: Shutterstock

## **I** grew up in a family of devout communists.

No one in my life believed in God and at school, everyone mocked Jews. One day I found out my father was Jewish, and I became terrified the students and teachers at school would find out. No place felt safe after this. Also, no place felt happy. At home my parents fought so much that I decided I would marry as soon as possible and move out. But after I married and had our first child, I realized my new life wasn't any happier.

I soon found out my husband was regularly going out late at night to be with other women and our marriage collapsed. A while later, I met another man who accepted not only me but my son as well and soon we were married. We struggled in our marriage, but his mother and sister were strong believers and they prayed for both of us. They told me about Yeshua and I saw light in their lives.

In 2005, my husband and I decided to make Aliyah as a family and move to Israel. A few months before we moved two major things happened in my life—I became pregnant and I accepted the message of

## RESCUE

# Lana

forgiveness and eternal life. With Yeshua in my life, moving to Israel became even more significant and when we arrived, I was overwhelmed by the beauty of the land.

Though we had both wanted to come to Israel, once we arrived, my husband made no efforts to find a job to support our family and refused to let me join a congregation. The birth of our first child in our beloved homeland should have been such a joyous occasion, but I mostly remember all the fighting between us. One day I found several porn magazines in our home and as he watched I walked over to dump them in the garbage. He was so upset he punched me in the head. So I called the police and they took me and my kids to a shelter for battered women.

I eventually went back to my husband because I hoped my children could have a normal family life. The stress of everything, however, was taking its toll on my body and a couple of months after our daughter's first birthday I was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. I was told I could get treatment, but that I would experience times of weakness and be left barren from the radiation. I was at the end of myself and I wrote my mother-in-law. She was amazing and agreed to immediately come to Israel to help with the children so I could focus on my treatment.

Finally, with her influence in our home, I was able to go to a congregation. I began getting chemo treatments and because my husband couldn't hold down a job, we lived off the medical benefits I received. We went hungry often and the magazines appeared in our home again.

We struggled like this for three years until one day I came home from the treatments and my husband asked, "When will you die already?" This statement hit me hard and I painfully accepted that he simply did not want to be the husband and father I had hoped he would be.

The people in my congregation were very supportive during this difficult time and they joined with my mother-in-law's congregation back in Ukraine to pray for me and the cancer. Then, out of nowhere one day, the doctors told me they could no longer find the cancer! It was a miracle!

To add to my joy, the Israeli government awarded me an apartment for much less than market value. I knew

Lana continued

since I was now healthy, I could work and make the payments. **It was Psalm 113:9 fulfilled! “He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children.”**

I worked for 10 years as a caretaker for the elderly raising my children and paying off my home when I suffered a back injury while lifting one of my patients. As I could no longer lift anyone, the company fired me. I immediately began to study and train for a similar job that wouldn't require as much physical labor. I took out a loan to cover the cost of the course and the gap between jobs.

I finished the course and found a wonderful job working with the elderly in an assisted living home. Unfortunately, I didn't make enough to feed my family *and* pay off the loan. Then some friends in my congregation told me about Maoz' **IStandwithIsrael** and so I applied through my pastor.

**Two times in my life I believe I experienced a genuine miracle.** The first was when I was healed from cancer; the second was when **IStandwithIsrael** paid off my entire debt. Thank you, ISWI! Thank you, supporters! **God has rescued me.** ●

## STRENGTHEN

## Yanina

**M**y husband was a Messianic rabbi in our congregation in Ukraine before we immigrated to Israel. We had it good where we lived and were both respected ministers in our city. **But deep in our hearts we wished for our four young children (ages 8, 6, 5, and 2) to know Israel as their home.** It wasn't an easy decision, as two of our daughters were very successful in competitive artistic gymnastics and we didn't know what kind of athletic programs Israel would have. But we chose to believe God's will would be done.

We packed everything we owned, and said our last goodbyes to all our loved ones. **Then the day before we were to board our flight to Israel, my husband suddenly died.** We were devastated. We stayed long enough to bury him and mourn, but a month later, **I decided we were going to fulfill his dream for our family to plant our roots back in Israel.**

As soon as we arrived, we found a congregation and began serving there. We also found a great gymnastics program for the girls—which has really helped my girls feel like this is home. It's the early days that matter the most when you put a young plant into the ground, and **IStandwithIsrael's** help with groceries and my girls' gymnastics lessons has watered our soil as we adjust to our new country and culture. ●



Yanina's oldest daughter wins first place at the International Dance Festival in Israel.



## RESCUE

## Rizik

Rizik and his wife Shafika were born and raised in Nazareth. As a married couple, the opportunity arose for them to move to California where Rizik planted the first Arabic Baptist church in San Francisco. Their lives were good there, but one day they felt the Lord calling them home to Nazareth. So, they packed their bags and with their three children moved back to the city of Yeshua's childhood (though today it is a Muslim-majority city).

Soon after getting settled and they began serving in a congregation, Shafika was diagnosed with cancer. She was devastated and depressed with the diagnosis, so her doctor/psychologist recommended she open a business to keep her body moving and mind busy.

Rizik, an architect by trade (who designed one of the most iconic congregation buildings in Israel on Mt. Carmel), didn't feel he had the mind for a business but wanted to support his wife. Together they opened a restaurant near the Sea of Galilee. Though the restaurant brought her joy at first, as the treatments went on, she was unable to keep up with the high demands of the business, and it failed.

Soon after, the time came when heaven would call her home. Still mourning his wife's death, Rizik was notified that his only son had contracted meningitis. He died within months. Well into his 60's now, Rizik was left with his two daughters and his late-wife's restaurant debt of well over a quarter of a million dollars.

Over the next 22 years, Rizik continued to work as an engineer, as well as serve as an elder in Nazareth's Baptist Church. But the constant legal battles, calls from banks and collections agencies who would walk into his little apartment and confiscate anything they wanted, were like a dark cloud over his head.

Then in the fall of 2019, a judge ruled that if Rizik could pay off 10% of his debt (\$40,000)



within five months, the rest of his debt would be forgiven. If he could not, the banks would confiscate his small apartment which was his only remaining asset—and one he had hoped to pass on to his daughter, husband and grandbaby who lived with him. The ruling was both a miracle breakthrough, and yet at 84 years old, a seemingly impossible mission.

But Rizik had sown a life of service, and he was now asking God to help him reap. Friends from all over—both Arab and Jew—rallied around Rizik to raise each monthly payment and turn it in on time. The last payment was due in April of this year—right when COVID-19 struck and everything shut down.

The finish line was there, but the money was not. Businesses had shut down and even many of the banks were closed. People couldn't work and everyone he knew had given all they could.

Our **IStandwithIsrael** team was scrambling to get money for food to hundreds of families before the Passover when we heard of a gentleman in Nazareth who was about to lose his apartment—in the middle of the Pandemic.

Clearly, this was not what God wanted to see happen.

At first, we thought we'd have to drive the money up to him because his deadline fell during the

Rizik continued

Passover break and the banks wouldn't open in time. Then the authorities announced they were closing all the roads for the Passover lockdown and we realized we wouldn't get there and back in time. In the end, our bank, which was so impressed with the work we

were doing to help people during the crisis, went the extra mile and made sure the funds arrived in Rizik's bank account by the deadline. When we finally spoke to Rizik on the phone, he did manage to get out the words "thank you" between the tears. ●

STRENGTHEN

## City of Life CONGREGATION

Sderot was built decades ago when the area was peaceful—back before Hamas took over. Therefore, many of the houses there weren't built with bomb shelters. Today, public bomb shelters are everywhere as the inhabitants of Sderot—both young and old—are on constant alert day and night. Rockets are fired at least once a month—sometimes hundreds of rockets in one day. Residents have a mere 15 seconds between the time the sirens go off and the moment the first rocket hits.

It was to this town that Michael and Dina Beener felt the Lord called them. What started as an outreach to the youth at the local university 20 years ago has evolved into a thriving humanitarian outreach and congregation today.

Despite the local Orthodox Jews who continuously attack their work, the city officials have openly recognized Michael and Dina's integrity and the positive influence they have had on the community. Michael and Dina's congregation is a beacon of light in a PTSD-filled city, and so when they submitted their request to help with some equipment for their new congregational meeting hall, **IStandwithIsrael** was honored to take part. ●



The Sderot police station includes a collection of hundreds of rocket remains fired from Gaza.

When people we know plan a tour to Israel, we at Maoz usually get a call a few weeks ahead of the trip "making sure" things are safe over here. The standard answer we like to give (with a smirk!) is that you'd be safer walking the streets of Jerusalem or Tel Aviv at 2 am than you would be in most cities around the world.

Having said that, we do explain there are certain areas you shouldn't visit unless the Lord really needs you to go there. Sderot is one of those places. Sderot is located a couple of kilometers from the Gaza border—where the virtues of rocket launching are taught to Palestinian kids from kindergarten through high school.



## What subscribers are saying...

***Your prayer letter on “Repentance, Forgiveness and Blessing” was excellent! Your words should be broadcasting over Washington DC!***

**- Sandra, WFXR Radio**

***I am very grateful for you going in depth about what is REALLY happening in Israel. Living in America, we do not get the whole picture. Again, thank you for being there.***

**- J.S.**

***Dear MaozIsrael,  
I love these prayer and praise letters. They are the best source that I have of what's going on in the Land.***

**- A.H.**

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