



New Beginnings

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Six Inspiring **I Stand with Israel** Stories




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*“Come, let us return to the Lord.
For He has torn us, but He will heal us;
He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.
He will revive us after two days;
He will raise us up on the third day,
that we may live before Him.”*

HOSEA 6:1-2

After two years of war, we’ve come up for air with our eyes turned toward the future. The timing of this relief in Israel coincides with Maoz Israel’s 50th year, a year of Jubilee celebration for our global ministry!

As is tradition, we will close out the calendar year with personal stories of lives we’ve had the privilege of serving through **I Stand with Israel**. This year’s requests for help were a complex blend of war-related struggles and everyday challenges happening simultaneously.

There are so many stories to share—both heart-wrenching and hope-filled. Some of the names were changed to protect the individuals. But each one of them wanted you to know the impact **I Stand with Israel** has had on their lives.



STORY ONE

Yishai

I was born and raised in central Israel. When it was time to join the army, I wholeheartedly joined the artillery combat unit in 2022.

We spent much of our first year on the northern border with Lebanon and then moved to protecting our borders in Judea and Samaria. At the end of August 2023, a terrorist attacked our station. I watched one of my best friends die in front of my eyes. He was the most selfless kind of guy. Just a few months prior, he had donated bone

marrow to a 12-year-old kid he had never met. My world began to feel like a constant threat.

The month after his death, October 7th happened, and I was sent into Gaza and Lebanon.

In the midst of the chaos of fighting, I would be notified of more and more friends who had fallen in battle. In less than two years, I lost 12 more friends. Some of them I had known since childhood.

I stayed and fought as long as the IDF asked me to. When I finally went home, however, I was flooded with flashbacks and panic attacks. Thankfully, the army recognized my PTSD symptoms, and **I Stand with Israel** has helped me receive treatment that doesn’t just help me cope, but is showing me what it means to have new life. ■

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STORY TWO

Natalie

I was born in Siberia, but that's a mere technicality for me. When I was four months old, we immigrated to Israel. So the beautiful greenery and mountains of northern Israel is the only home I've ever known.

I grew up in a believing home. My grandfather and uncle are pastors. My parents and much of my extended family are in some type of ministry. As a teenager, I made the decision to follow the Lord. However, as my army draft neared, my heart wavered. My friends were going out a lot and their lives looked so full of fun. I began struggling with the question of why I had to abstain from so many things that my friends were doing.

The trickle of questions became a gushing river I couldn't resist. "You're wasting your life being good," the voice would whisper to my heart. At the time, my life wasn't all that bad. I already knew who I wanted to marry—and we had even gotten engaged. Yet somehow, everything felt like it was hanging by a thread.

Then our engagement ended abruptly and the thread broke. I told God I didn't want Him anymore and spent my army years living away from Him. When I finished the army, I started dating an unbelieving man, and we were soon married. We brought three children into our very toxic relationship. He was verbally and physically abusive, but also manipulative, and I didn't know how to get out of the situation.

Despite telling myself I didn't believe in God, I found myself instinctively praying—begging Him to rescue me. Then came the day everything blew up at home. The police were involved, and I found strength to take my children and leave. My heart was finally ready to listen, and I could hear the Lord whispering, "Come home, child." And so I did.

God became my refuge. A source of strength and a safe place all at once. I began a new life serving in the congregation, working in a kindergarten and caring for my kids.

I refused to live in debt, so I had to make some tough choices for our family. My three children and I share a one-bedroom apartment. We live within our means on my kindergarten teacher's salary while I am studying cybersecurity and slowly building a business. We don't spend money on outings or vacations. My only expense that stretches me each month is medication for one of my children who has a disability.

I heard from a friend in our congregation that **I Stand with Israel** really helps people and encouraged me to apply for help. I did, and they agreed to cover the cost of the medication for the year!

People may look at me from the outside and see my struggles, but I feel the Lord's strength pushing me forward whispering, "Don't give up!" So, I know His future for me is bright. ■



STORY THREE

Asaf

I grew up in a divided home, where my mother followed Yeshua and my father was an Orthodox Jew. I, myself, found my father's beliefs more compelling. My perspective, however, took a turn when I spent two weeks in jail suspected of a white-collar crime. During that time, I was visited by Yeshua in dreams and visions and came out of jail calling those the best two weeks of my life.

I was introduced to **Beresheet Congregation** and immediately plugged in. There I met Sarah. We spoke for hours on end about the things of the Lord and it was quickly evident we were a match made in heaven. With my white-collar court case still active,

my job options were limited but I worked long hours in the capacity I was permitted. Sarah and I spent every additional moment serving in our congregation.

We married, and Sarah soon became pregnant. Bringing a child into the world brought us much joy—and many expenses. **I Stand with Israel** stood with us during this time to provide for our precious daughter. We are extremely grateful and determined to be a family that glorifies God in Israel. ■

STORY FOUR

Gennady

My past includes 16 years of prison time and 12 years of heavy drug abuse. Almost 20 years ago, the Lord found me and brought me to a ministry called "Living Israel". I was cleaned up in this center and since then I have been serving the Lord there.

The congregation here in Katzrin, in the Golan Heights, was founded in 2008. When it began to grow, our senior pastors received a vision—to open small house congregations all over Israel that will have a sense of family.

The congregation in Katzrin has activities throughout the week where we can be spiritually renewed, refreshed, and have fellowship with each other. We work to help restore lives both spiritually and practically. Many people have health or legal issues and need a ride to get treatment or to court hearings. Katzrin is a small town with few transportation options. We had an old car, but it broke down often and we would miss meetings and important appointments.

Vehicles in Israel are incredibly expensive and so we were grateful when **I Stand with Israel** agreed to help us purchase a more reliable one. It was such a timely blessing and we use it constantly! ■

STORY FIVE

Shirel

I was born into a Christian Lebanese family. My father fought alongside the IDF against Hezbollah. So, in 2000, when the IDF withdrew from Southern Lebanon, we fled and relocated to northern Israel and planted a small congregation. My sisters and I lead worship there, singing in Hebrew, Arabic, and English—three languages that tell the story of where we've come from and who we've become.

From the time I was little, I loved animation and storytelling. Disney movies, video games and cartoons filled my imagination. I dreamed of creating something that could inspire others. We believe God is restoring the arts among believers.

I applied and was accepted to the Israeli Animation College in Tel Aviv. This was exciting, until I realized the long commute would take up all the hours I would have been able to work to pay for school. I was planning to postpone my enrollment and save up when my pastor told me that **I Stand with Israel** is a fund that helps believers like me, who want to make a difference for the Kingdom.



I reached out to them, and to my surprise, they offered to help. Their support took an enormous weight off my shoulders and made it possible for me to begin my studies on time. Now, as I study 3D animation and continue serving in worship, my heart is full. ■

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STORY SIX

Yulia

My husband and I met in Kazakhstan when I was serving as a translator in his father's congregation. We only spent two weeks together before he returned to Israel where he lived, but I knew I would follow him there. Within the year I immigrated and we were married. In Israel, we became active in our local congregation with the children and women's groups.

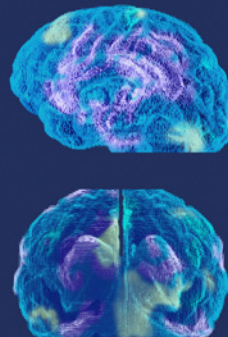
We brought two beautiful boys into the world. When our youngest son was three, he was diagnosed with autism. We spent years in various treatments with limited success. Then, a couple of years ago, we were referred to a professor who specializes in our son's symptoms. In the process of his treatment, he retested our son and concluded that the initial diagnosis was incorrect. He showed us several scans and concluded that our son's brain had been partially blocked, potentially from an allergic reaction to a vaccine as a child. The best part about this news was that this was treatable! His recommendation was a series of pressure chamber treatments five times a week for an extended amount of time.

We have just completed the first round and the change in brain activity from the new scans is significant and incredibly promising!

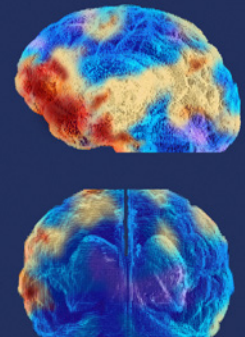
Each treatment is hundreds of dollars and that is where **I Stand with Israel** came in to help. We are excited about our son's future. His name is Yair – which translates, "He will light the way." We are literally watching his mind light up and believe his life will bring light to many around him. ■

Graphic showing actual changes in the child's brain after treatment

BEFORE



AFTER





December 2025



Happy Holidays from Jerusalem!

All this year, across Israel, we met people determined to rebuild their lives and their nation from the ground up. From single moms finding new strength, to young believers launching into creative industries, to congregations serving their communities—it's **amazing what can happen when we are able to lend a helping hand.**

Through **I Stand with Israel**, we've seen what happens when **Christians around the world say, "We're standing with you."** Real needs are being met. Real lives are being changed. Families like Natalie's, leaders like Gennady, students like Shirel, and parents like Yulia are taking bold steps forward because someone believed in them.

That "someone" was just like you—who gave of what they had towards something that mattered.

As we step into a new year, we want to keep that momentum going—helping more Israelis rebuild, dream, and thrive.

A new year is at the door and you may have just enough to help us say "Yes!" to one more person who requested our aid! **Your gift, no matter the amount, can help bring more I Stand with Israel stories to life in 2026.**

Your support equips believers to rise stronger—spiritually, emotionally, and practically. Together, we're not just rebuilding lives—we're strengthening the Body of Messiah in Israel.

Let's finish this year strong and start Maoz Israel's 50th year of Jubilee with a WOW!

In His service,

Kobi and Shani Ferguson

Kobi & Shani Ferguson

Kobi Ferguson
President & CEO

Shani Ferguson
COO



ENTERING
OUR

55TH
YEAR
JUBILEE

OF GLOBAL MINISTRY



HAPPY HANNUKAH

From Ari & Shira Sorko-Ram, Kobi & Shani Ferguson,
and the Maoz Israel team in Israel

 **maoz israel**