



## Support the Project

An estimated 4,500 young adults make the life-changing decision to move to Israel, all alone. A generous donation of Euro30,000 will provide needed support to these young new immigrants before, during and after their army service, helping to facilitate their successful integration into Israeli society.

In return for your generous support, you will receive an annual report on the project's activities as well as an opportunity to meet some of the participants who have benefitted from the programme.

## Aliyah 2019: The Highest Number in a Decade

Since Israel was established, Keren Hayesod-United Israel Appeal, together with The Jewish Agency and the Government of Israel, has assisted more than three million Jews return to Zion and make aliyah. Israel's future depends on the continuation of aliyah and it is a national priority to bring any Jew, from anywhere in the world, to Israel. In the last decade, Israel welcomed over a quarter of a million new immigrants from 150 countries, including 34,000 in 2019 alone, a record high. An estimated 60% of this figure are under the age of 45, which includes several thousand new immigrant young adults who made aliyah by themselves, without any family or social support system in Israel.

As Keren Hayesod marks its Centennial of historic and unwavering support for Israel and the Jewish People, it is more committed than ever to facilitating the successful aliyah and absorption of all new immigrants, especially new immigrants who come to Israel alone. These young immigrants are highly motivated Zionists who want to make a positive contribution to Israel. This often begins with serving in the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), followed by higher education and professional/vocational training in pursuit of gainful employment. In order to ensure their successful integration into Israeli society, it is crucial that these new immigrants receive support both before, during and prior to their army service.

## Keren Hayesod's Response to Facilitating the Absorption of New Immigrant Young Adults

**Your generous support is requested to support two key initiatives that help to achieve this goal:**

- **The Garin Tzabar Programme** - a 360° support system for new immigrants who join the IDF as lone soldiers, before moving to Israel and joining the army, during and after their army service.
- **The Lone Immigrant Soldiers Assistance programme** - a continuum of services for immigrant soldiers alone in Israel both during their service and immediately after their discharge.

## The Garin Zabar Programme

Before they actually make aliyah, young Jews from around the world ages 18-23 who want to move to Israel and serve in the IDF can join the Garin Tzabar preparatory programme which provides them with comprehensive guidance and support that enables them to complete full and meaningful service in the IDF. Participants can be either Israeli born young adults who choose to return to Israel or individuals who choose to make aliyah for the first time.

Garin Tzabar has been operating for twenty-five years in partnership with the Ministry of Absorption and the Israel Scouts. Participants remain in the programme throughout their army service – for three full years. Each year, two new cohorts totalling 400 participants join the programme. Thus, at any given time there are approximately 1,000 participants.



Prior to when they leave for Israel, participants take part in a series of four preparatory seminars which help them get to know each other and form a cohesive group. The seminars also give them an opportunity to discuss and reflect on issues pertaining to their move to Israel, including study of the cultural, political and social characteristics of Israel and a thorough introduction to the IDF and its social role in Israeli society.

Upon arrival in Israel, participants who have a lower level of Hebrew knowledge attend a six-week extensive Hebrew Ulpan studies at the Garin Tzabar Village in Ra'anana. Afterwards, each Garin cohort is adopted by the Israel Scouts and placed in a host kibbutz that quickly becomes their home away from home. For three months, each group lives on one of 11 participating Garin Tzabar kibbutzim where they take part in an intensive Hebrew language ulpan that focuses on Hebrew as well as Israeli history and culture. Participants also receive assistance in dealing with Israeli bureaucracy, something that helps to ease their absorption into Israeli life, as well as attend seminars with educators and soldiers to develop unity within the Garin group and to prepare them for their army service. During this period, the Garin goes on hikes and trips to places of national significance and takes part in a special one-week army preparatory programme that gives them a taste of army life.

The core of the programme takes place during the participants' military service while they continue to live as a group and receive constant guidance and support from the Garin group. Once inducted into the IDF, the Garin members go into separate army units according to their interests and abilities where they serve between 2-3 years. Garin soldiers currently serve in more than 40 IDF units. Some 30% go on to officer or commander courses in the IDF.

The Garin members continue to keep in touch with their Garin Tzabar family and see each other often, heading home to their respective kibbutz or absorption centre for weekends and holidays throughout their army service. Once every four months, there is a Garin Tzabar Shabbat weekend for the entire Garin. All Garin staff, both from the kibbutz, absorption centre and from the Israel Scouts, continue to work with all members throughout their army service period. There is also an alumni network with over 5,000 participants who stay in touch beyond their army service. The alumni network organizes conferences for recently discharged soldiers that feature information about higher education opportunities, government organizations that help new immigrants and discharged soldiers as well as how to financially prepare for civilian life, find a job, write a resume and more.

## The Lone Immigrant Soldiers Assistance Programme

Each year, thousands of motivated, idealistic Jewish young adults around the world choose to leave their homes and families, start a new life in Israel and serve in the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). Many of these young Jews make this life-changing decision even though they do not speak Hebrew, are unfamiliar with Israeli culture and have no support system in Israel. Far from their families, these immigrant soldiers need to find their own apartments and pay for rent, utilities, food, transportation, and other personal expenses which are extremely difficult with their standard army salary.

Since its inception in 2005, the Support Lone Soldiers Programme has provided immigrant lone soldiers with crucial support during and immediately after their military service, with the goal of facilitating their absorption and integration into Israeli society. Established by the Jewish Agency for Israel in conjunction with Keren Hayesod-UIA, the Lone-Immigrant-Soldiers Support Programme provides a basket of services to new immigrant soldiers both during and immediately after their military service. Services provided range from counselling, financial and practical support and an all-round hug.

Each year an estimated 1,000 immigrant soldiers who are alone in Israel complete their army service and make the transition from the army to civilian life. The challenges of the transition to civilian life at the end of their army service can be particularly daunting. While this transition can be difficult for any soldier, it is especially challenging for these immigrant soldiers. Whereas native Israelis return to their homes and families, lone immigrant soldiers are left to provide for their basic necessities totally on their own. They also don't have the support of a home or family close by to help them make important life decisions related to education, employment and housing.

By providing support to new immigrant soldiers, we demonstrate our gratitude for their determination and commitment to serve Israel. Most importantly, this support provides them with a measure of security and comfort at a time filled with uncertainty, and shows them that they are not alone.

### The main elements of the programme include:

- **A pre-discharge seminar and workshop** focusing on employment guidance, individual coaching and financial counselling on everything from how to write a cheque in Hebrew and read a rental contract to navigating their rights as citizens, medical insurance and paying taxes.
- **Grants** - many young new immigrants alone in Israel live in rented apartments or dormitory housing. These grants help lone soldiers to buy necessary essentials or pay for other expenses related to their life as civilians.
- **An alumni network and social programmes** such as courses, workshops, trips and parties to promote optimal integration into Israeli society.

## Personal Stories

Two Keren-Hayesod-supported initiatives on behalf of young adult new immigrants– Garin Tzabar and the Support for Lone Soldiers Programme – offer soldiers assistance before, during and after their army service, helping to ease transition into civilian life. These two stories highlight the stories of two new immigrant lone soldiers in the IDF. There are hundreds more immigrant soldiers like them who require your support.

## Alexandra's Story

Aleksandra was born in Chernigov, Ukraine. While in high school, Alexandra became curious about her Jewish heritage and visited Israel twice, once as a tourist and a second time as a participant in Taglit Birthright. After Taglit, she decided that she wanted to make aliyah by herself. So, at the age of 17, Alexandra applied and was accepted to the Jewish Agency's SELAH Programme. SELAH is an abbreviation for "Students Before Parents"). As part of SELAH, Alexandra lived in the Carmiel Absorption Centre where she studied Hebrew intensively and prepared for higher education and integration into Israeli society.

Alexandra is a very ambitious young woman and a very serious student. She learned Hebrew extremely fast and is always anxious and willing to help others and radiates positive energy to everyone around her.

Alone in Israel, Alexandra decided to join the Garin Tzabar Programme, which has become her instant family. She is currently serving in the Israeli Defence Forces in the Air Force as an officer in the Education Corps. So far, Alexandra is very pleased with her position and her experience so far in Garin Tzabar.



Alexandra, right, in her Air Force uniform.

## Shmuel Auerbach

"When I was nineteen, I made aliyah, learned Hebrew and served in the Israeli army for three years where I was in the elite Sayeret Reconnaissance Unit. It was one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my life. The word "lone soldier", to me, represents a paradox. On one hand, my family was thousands of miles away and I saw them only a handful of times during my service. On the other, I built a new family here in Israel that will last a lifetime.

In my army service, I was part of a unique programme called Garin Tzabar which paired me with a wonderful adoptive family on a moshav in the northern Galilee. Because I had this huge family to return home to on the weekends, I didn't feel alone. My adoptive family took me in as their son, and nurtured me every step of the way, greatly easing the transition. We still get together for Shabbat meals.

The second family I made was my army peers. When I made aliyah, my goal was to serve in the most elite unit possible. Together with two dozen other young men, I began 16 months of gruelling training, spending every moment together, forging a bond between us that I share with no one else. Upon graduation, we emerged as an elite team of operatives, but more importantly, brothers.

During Operation Protective Edge, I served in Gaza where for sixteen days, my comrades and I fought to quell the rocket attacks on Israel civilians. It was the most trying experience of my life, and I lost four friends. When we crossed the border back into Israel, we were smiling from ear to ear. Citizens of the south waited for us with food and gifts in appreciation. It was then that I realized I had a new family. There is no place like Israel. When I limped back to my apartment in Tel Aviv with my gun and uniform, people paid for my groceries and looked at me with appreciation and understanding. The Israeli people are cursed with the burden of having to go through the army, and sending its next generation to do the same. This hardship creates a common bond, however invisible. I was now a part of it, and I am proud."

