



ALL THE WAY HOME

The arrival hall at Ben Gurion International Airport is a familiar scene welcoming new arrivals to Israel.

JULIA'S TEARS STARTED flowing the moment our team arrived. Embarrassed, she wiped at her cheeks. "It's okay," I said. "You can cry." And so she did.

The tears flowed as Julia—flanked by her sons, Lev, 18, and Chaim, 13—watched the BFP volunteers fill their empty apartment with gifts. First came a dining room table and then a bed for Chaim, followed by a sofa bed to replace the thin mattress in the living room on which Julia slept. Soon, the kitchen overflowed with kitchen utensils, cookware, crockery and cleaning utensils. Fresh linen covered the beds. Bags of groceries lined the wall. Colorful rugs and tasteful knickknacks completed the picture. A new laptop and a television came as the cherry on top.

In a matter of an hour, what was once three tiny, bare rooms had turned into a cozy home for Julia, Lev and Chaim; a nest where they can heal from the trauma they've suffered in war-torn Ukraine and start building a new life in Israel.

In March, Julia was forced to make an unimaginable choice. Israel beckoned as a refuge from war for this precious Jewish family, but fleeing Ukraine meant leaving Julia's husband, Dmitriy, and their oldest son, Matvey, 19, behind, as men over 18 are not permitted to leave. "How can a mother make that choice," Julia shakes her head. "Finally, Matvey convinced me. For his brothers, he said."

Julia, Lev and Chaim crossed the border into Poland four days before Lev's 18th birthday; four days before he would have been forced to remain behind to help defend Ukraine against the Russians. Days later, they touched down in Israel.

Although they'd escaped the war, Julia now faced a different battle. "I lay awake at night, wondering where we'd live and how I'd feed my sons," she shares.

Starting over in Israel is much harder than she expected, Julia admits. "My friend went to Germany," she shares. "She tells me to come there, that life is easy and affordable. But we are Jewish," she says, lifting her chin. "And Israel is the only place for Jewish people."

When Julia received the news that we wanted to help by furnishing her empty apartment, her first reaction was fear. "I didn't understand. What would I have to give in return? Then I thought you would bring the old, broken things other people didn't want anymore. But this?" she laughed, her eyes now sparkling, "I never expected this. Nobody will believe me. I'll have to send pictures as proof."

In a matter of an hour, the destiny of this precious family was changed from gnawing fear that left Julia tossing and turning on a thin mattress on the living room floor to a stable foundation for building a new life. Because of the selfless love of Christian donors, this family has a future. Chaim has now started school, while Julia and Lev are taking Hebrew lessons. Lev wants to join the Israel Defense Forces as soon as he is fluent in Hebrew. And on weekends, the three pile onto the bus and make their way to the beach. They live in the hope that one day soon, Dmitriy and Matvey can join them. This is home now, they say.

As our team prepared to leave, Julia told us, "I think we are living in times when God's prophecies are being fulfilled, when God is uniting Jews and Christians." We couldn't agree more.



Chaim (left), Julia (center) and Lev (right) with our team

The Rest of the Journey

As Christians, it is our privilege to partner with God as He gathers the Jewish people from the four corners of the earth and brings them back to the land of their promise just like He said He would. But arriving in Israel is only the first part of the journey home.

Many new *olim* (immigrants) arrive with nothing, and must spend months learning Hebrew before someone will employ them. Like Julia, many lie awake at night, wondering how they will feed their families. Can you imagine facing these challenges after the trauma of war, after leaving everything and everyone familiar behind and while trying to figure out the culture and way of life in a foreign country?

As Christians, it is our privilege to partner with God to carry the light of His love and care into the lives of these new *olim*. Your donation to our **New Immigrant Fund** will help them put food on the table, cover transport costs, send children to school and ultimately sleep at night. But more than that. Your gift will show them that they are not alone, that Christians who have never met them before care about them and want to see them succeed. Will you prayerfully consider making a generous donation today? Your gift will take them by the hand and help lead them all the way home.

Blessings from Jerusalem,
Rev. Peter Fast,
CEO

BRIDGES FOR PEACE Your Israel Connection...

New Immigrant Fund

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_____ Minimum US \$150/month
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