

Making Aliyah to Israel Comes With a Price

It's easy to romanticize the idea of Jews returning to Israel—planeloads arriving from the “four corners of the earth.” It is truly awesome to see this prophecy, thousands of years in the making, now being realized before our very eyes. But making aliyah is no piece of cake!

Aliyah, the Hebrew word for “immigrating,” is actually the word for the literal act of “going up,” as in going up stairs or an elevator. The word is almost ironic, because for most new immigrants to Israel, adjusting to life in their new country is quite the opposite.

For most immigrants from economically advanced countries—or even less prosperous lands—their standard of living in Israel will probably never be the same as it was in their country of birth. Tel Aviv is now the 34th most expensive city in the world—topping by far cities such as Berlin, Washington D.C. and San Francisco.

Take for example, an Israeli believer named Irina. She is a single mom with two young girls, who immigrated from Ukraine and works in Maoz' accounting department. Despite her awards in windsailing and a pleasant life in Ukraine, Irina's parents encouraged her to make aliyah. Even though she came to Israel with a college education, after nearly 14 years in the country, life is anything but easy, as she continues to struggle with the language, the culture and just making ends meet for herself and her girls.

“In the community of Messianic Jewish believers, there are many problems, especially financial problems,” Irina says. “And that affects the children.”

Her dreams for her kids begin with them getting a good

education. But to Irina that means more than just reading, writing and arithmetic.

Today Irina's two girls, Valeria and Kristina, ages 11 and 12, are both taking part in a musical education program sponsored by Maoz and our humanitarian aid division known as . It's a program that allows kids, who otherwise couldn't afford it, to study a musical instrument and voice training.

Both of Irina's girls are taking piano lessons. The oldest one has also taken up the flute. She goes for modern music—and the classics. The younger loves “tickling the ivories” with her favorite music from the ballet, *The Nutcracker*.

“It's something special to study music,” says Irina. “To me it's higher than other forms of education; it's more cultural. And music has always been important to the Jewish people.”

Irina has seen fruit from the girls' music lessons in other areas as well. She says it gives them confidence and allows them to relax so they can study well in all their subjects. Already, they are participating in a children's choir that is a volunteer project led by Tiferet Yeshua's congregational worship leaders.

“Kids have so much free time,” Irina said, “and they can waste it in the streets or by sitting in front of computers all the time. Instead, my girls are involved in music and concerts. This causes them to dream about doing something amazing in life. It allows them to express themselves and to be an example to other kids. It connects them to the arts and musical history, and to the worship team in their congregation. They're learning about another world.

“We know from history that most talented people came from less-advantaged families. Studying music can raise the level of life for kids that come from difficult economic backgrounds. They are learning something very big and very beautiful.”

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