



Update . . .

October 2010

5771 Cheshvan



Lone soldiers receive care packages during basic training.

Letter from a Lone Soldier

In 2009 I came to the conclusion that a piece of my heart was missing and that piece was Israel. I knew at that moment that I had to go back, even if that meant without my family, to start a new life on my own.

I can't lie, not a day goes by when I don't think of my family and how much I miss them. Family is a huge part of who I am and their physical absence often times makes it difficult to overcome emotional and mental obstacles.

I joined a program called *garin tzabar* which provided me a group of people like myself as my family and companions that would experience the journey of the army and independent living along with me. From the day I joined the Israeli army as a lone soldier, my life has never been the same. I experienced things people my age may never experience, met and dealt with people of different ranks and backgrounds, understood the importance of punctuality, value of friendship, leadership, communication, and of course enjoyed the rewards and the

responsibility working with my fellow soldiers.

Despite hardships of being a "lone soldier", I can say with a full heart that I don't regret for a second the decision I made and the life I have chosen to live. It really is true when people say that whatever doesn't kill a person only makes one stronger.

Being a soldier is difficult in its own right: the long hours one stays awake, the exhausting shooting ranges, classes, and field work where one's feet scream from pain and fatigue—but at the end of the day and later; at the end of one's service, a word that is repeatedly mentioned is that this is an adventure.

It is a crucial and pivotal time in a young person's life where one builds character and begins to mold into the person he/she is meant to be.

Each and every day I learn something new. Every day I become more aware of the transition I have made as a person, as a soldier, and especially as an Israeli.

Many look at me differently, more admiringly for taking the step I took, but I don't see it as anything different from any other citizen here in Israel. For that same reason, I don't consider myself to be a "lone soldier". My family may not be here with me to experience everything that I experience, but I have gained an army of people and a system that strengthens me and encourages me to be the person I always wanted to be.

The Lone Soldier who wrote this letter was originally born in Israel and moved to the United States as a small child. This native Israeli returned with a university-level command of English and leadership skills to offer the Israeli Defense Forces. Most lone soldiers are foreign immigrants and some are orphans. Native-born Israelis, like this one, can also find themselves separated by thousands of miles from their families during their mandatory army service. They receive the same assistance as any other lone soldier.

Every \$100 we receive sponsors a young soldier with no family in Israel during our upcoming Chanukah projects. Donations of any size always make a big difference.

Special events, like weddings and bar mitzvahs, happen year round for hundreds of at-risk kids and needy young adults in Israel. Donations designated "special events" will be set aside for such use.

Show your support for Israel. Visit our YouTube.com channel and link our videos to your web site:

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