



Ana Luiza Tapia

"I completed medical school in Brazil and then did my specialization in intensive care at UCLA. But I saw how hard it was for my parents to raise us Jewishly in Brazil. I knew that if I wanted to have a Jewish family I must go to Israel."

Ana Luiza Tapia's journey to Israel sounds like a riveting novel. She was a successful doctor in her native Brazil, the daughter of a journalist and a museum curator. Both her maternal and paternal grandparents were Holocaust survivors. Ana was connected to her Jewish roots and always thought of going to Israel.

In January, 2008, at the age of 26, she gave all of her savings and her car to her parents who were struggling financially, and arrived in Israel with \$500 in her pocket. "I didn't know a word of Hebrew," says Ana. "But I knew that I had to make Israel my home."

Ana had no friends and no family in Israel. She went to study Hebrew at the Jewish Agency's Ulpan Etzion Absorption Center in Jerusalem with young professionals from all over the world. When she developed kidney failure, she was rushed to the hospital but could not communicate with anyone. It was the Ulpan Etzion director, her teachers and the other students who visited her everyday and helped her through this time. "It is amazing to me how warm and caring the people in Israel are," explains Ana. "When people see you alone, they reach out."



הדפוס בבית הדפוס של הסוכנות היהודית

This help also extended to her job search when her Ulpan teacher helped Ana write her resume; Ana secured a position with Abbott, one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies. She rented an apartment in Jerusalem and spent all of her spare money to buy Hebrew books and continue learning.

Ana has just received her call-up notice from the army, and in a few months she will be a lone soldier. She was shocked to be drafted at her age, but the army wrote that they need doctors in her field and Ana will serve in the intensive care and rescue unit. "My profession is to help people, and now is the time for me to help this country that has given me so much," says Ana. "If we Jews do not care for each other, who will?"