

## My stay in Israel in the time of corona - Servas experience

I visited Israel for the first time seven years ago. I was alone and I hardly knew anyone here. Yael and Chaim from Ramat Gan have been my first hosts here. When I saw them – I had the feeling I'm home. And on the next day, when we were hanging the laundry together, in the warm and gentle light of the November sun (in Poland the darkest and cool days usually) – I had again a strong feeling that there is now a better place for me here and now.

And every other time being here I always stopped in Ramat Gan and I have been greeted with my beloved family with a sentence: My home is your home!

And now I'm here on a longer scholarship from the Tel Aviv University. It was supposed to last 3 months, but now in this situation, I'm not sure when I can go back home. In the most stressing time for me, when the lockdown has been declared and all my plans are gone, I decided to stay here and to wait for a better time, working from home. It wouldn't be an easy decision if not for my dear hosts. I'm getting from them a big support almost every day: talks, comfort, nice food, even beautiful flowers! We spent seder and Shabbat dinners together. If there is anything I need – they are here. I'm not alone, even if so far from my home in Poland, my husband and my three daughters.



I can see that Israeli society is well prepared for living in difficult conditions. People are organized, one can feel the spirit of solidarity and sheer neighbourly kindness. People care much for each other. I got much support from other Servas members, my good friends from the previous stays here: Ruth and Yaakov from Mitzpe Ramon, who write and call me from time to time, just asking, if I'm ok, sending information I need and just being close; Revital from Jerusalem, my dear soul sister, who helped me always with her wise words, when I had a hard time in Poland and who encouraged me also now; Meira and Mike, my "adopted family" from Jerusalem – we became life long friends since we met for the first time, Tsvika and Sara from Galilee, thanks to them I saw so many beauties of the countryside and we managed even to see an exhibition together before the corona started. All the people called or wrote me many times asking how I am, if I need everything, sending pictures from their gardens, fancy face masks they made for themselves, just to make me feel better. There are no words to express my big gratitude towards them!

Maybe I lost some research possibilities – the archives are closed, I can't interview Holocaust survivors as I planned – but I gained here something more: the sense of human solidarity, of friendship, of a real care, of love. I couldn't get more than it. Thank you so much!!!

Agnieszka, Servas Poland