

“Ministry with Holocaust Survivors” - Maxim Katz

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Shalom dear friends!

It is a great honor for me to share what God is doing in the ministry with the Holocaust Survivors. However, before telling about the ministry itself, it would be beneficial to clarify a little about this particular group of people.

These are the people who were at death camps or ghetto themselves, who were sent to the works, who were refugees or suffered because of Nazism. According to the reports, there are more than 150.000 people in Israel who can be viewed as a Holocaust Survivor. 60% of survivors are worried about their economic circumstances. 50 thousand Israelis who survived the Catastrophe of European Jewry live below the poverty line and cannot afford some food products and medicine.

66% of the Holocaust Survivors live on less than 3.000 NIS per month (\$859) which is less than a one-room apartment rent rate in Jerusalem or Tel-Aviv. Therefore, more than a third part of Survivors ask for help. Around 45 thousand people live receiving less than 1.000 NIS per month for food (these results are provided by the National Insurance Institute).

More than 230 thousand Holocaust survivors and victims came to Israel from the former Soviet Union together with the mass repatriation group. Nowadays, 25 years after the mass exodus of Jewish people and their family members from Soviet Union began, there are around 70 to 80 thousand Holocaust survivors who are still alive - *“nitzolei Shoa”*. In 1990 there were 23.000 war veterans among them - those people who fought against Nazism on USSR territory. As of today, there are a little more than 5.000. Moreover, the youngest of them are over 85. Forty Holocaust Survivors die every day. On average, 15.000 people die per year. The death rate among Holocaust Survivors increases every year. In 2012, an average

of 430 people died per month. In 2013 the number rose to 600 and to 1.000 people in 2014.

We have been working with this group for more than 12 years. We have a very close connection with the Israel Organization of Russian-speaking people of “Holocaust and Ghetto Survivors” that embrace more than 5.000 people from 27 cities in Israel. Naturally, we want these people to be saved and to follow Yeshua, but we also want to simply help them. Despite economic difficulties, many people have an even worse problem – loneliness. They need someone to talk to, to be listened, hugged and someone to be near them. Visiting them at their houses, we spend time with the elderlies, we pray and discuss the Word of God. We celebrate Jewish feasts together. For the last few years, we have had many opportunities to gather 300 people from different cities to celebrate Pesach and Sukkot. It was a true blessing. A concert followed by dinner, a great fellowship and explanation of the connection of these feasts to the Scripture and the Messiah gave them a chance to hear and see the love of God. Unfortunately, this year we could not continue because of the lack of finances.

We provide practical help with the Christians from different countries. We renovate and clean houses of the lonely and infirm. We organize different events for them where we talk with each other as well as share the good news and personal testimonies. Moreover, we organize tours to Jerusalem from different cities four times a year. Visiting places connected to Yeshua, we can tell them about our salvation. The Garden Tomb and our Messianic center are our constant destinations where everyone can take some books that discuss faith issues. For the last four years, we have organized 3-4 day trips to the Dead Sea for the Holocaust Survivors from Sderot. It gives them a chance to relax after constant bombing. Apart from that, we meet in the morning and evening to worship God and study Scripture.

We have a special fund for those who need additional financial help (hearing aid, teeth treatment, prostheses, etc). There are more than 100 people who receive this help annually. Also, around 100 people obtain food packages on monthly basis.

A very special ministry for these people is trips abroad (Poland, Germany, Denmark). Each trip is a great blessing. We prepare the program together with the friends from local churches. It includes not only sightseeing tours but meetings with local believers, visiting congregations, having fellowship and studying Bible. The time they spend at the trip with believers is the same as attaining congregation for two years. Many prayed for the first time at these trips. Majority of people are atheists and they have never prayed or read Scripture before. Since they were brought up in the former Soviet Union, it is a very difficult step even to accept the existence of God. But we see how God changed people because of this ministry. As a result, there are those who gave their hearts to God, got baptized and attend congregations, which is a true miracle! We have Bible study every week at our Messianic Center and most of people who come are Holocaust Survivors. God blessed us even more because this ministry let us get to know children and grandchildren of the Holocaust Survivors and to reach out to them as well.

For the last few years, I have seen how God is working in their hearts, and it brings me a great joy.

“Our mission is not only bringing the Good News to Holocaust Survivors but making their dream to die with dignity come true.”