Facing Winter Alone

They survived the Holocaust – now The Fellowship is helping elderly Jews in Israel and the former Soviet Union survive the frigid winter months.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Read an excerpt from Rabbi Eckstein’s new booklet on angels

One French Jewish family’s frightening wake-up call

An unexpected blessing on a Jerusalem bus
Happy New Year, friends! I pray that 2017 has started well for you.

When I put on my winter coat the other day, I found myself thinking of Anna, a woman I met on a trip to Ukraine around this time last year. Anna is an 85-year-old Holocaust survivor who lives alone in a remote village.

Anna is destitute and can only afford so many logs for the wood-burning stove that heats her humble home. Often she only has enough to burn one log a day. So when the fire goes out, she wraps herself in the few blankets she owns and climbs on top of the stove to take advantage of the residual heat for a few hours.

When I gave Anna a care package of basic foods, her response moved me: “My life is in God’s hands and hopefully God will send more angels like you.” What a privilege it is to help people like Anna! This is the work you make possible every day. Read more of her story on page 4.

Your generous support also provides winter warmth assistance for Asiya and Alexander, elderly olim (immigrants) in Israel who survived the Holocaust and can now survive the cold winter months thanks to our help. Read their inspiring story on page 12.

In this issue you can also read about a special welcome ceremony we hosted for a group of olim who came to Israel on a Fellowship Freedom Flight from France (see page 8). That was a celebration to remember!

And two different Fellowship staff members in Israel share stories – one about a Tel Aviv terror attack (page 20), the other about a “chance” encounter with a person who has been helped by The Fellowship (page 16) – each offering unique perspectives from here in the Holy Land.

It is always a privilege to share with you what your faithful partnership has accomplished. I hope that seeing the fruit of our ministry will encourage your heart as much as it has mine.

Shalom!

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein
Founder and President
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The Jerusalem Post recently released its annual list of the world’s 50 most influential Jewish people. Congratulations to Rabbi Eckstein for making the list! The JPost included him for providing aid “in all sectors of Israeli society and in Jewish communities around the world” and raising “more than $1.3 billion to assist Israel and the Jewish people.” We feel blessed that Rabbi Eckstein continues to lead The Fellowship, bringing relief to so many suffering from poverty, illness, and war.

Feeding Israel with Fellowship Soup Kitchens

The generosity of Fellowship donors around the world makes it possible to feed hundreds of thousands of needy people in Israel at soup kitchens, where both their physical and spiritual needs are supported. Recently, Rabbi Eckstein and Yael Eckstein visited the soup kitchen operated by Fellowship-sponsored Yad B’Yad in Lod, helping to serve the visitors and assure them that they are not forgotten.

Dear Rabbi Eckstein,

Let me, on behalf of the Global United Fellowship, extend sincerest gratitude to The Fellowship for the expression of love and kindness in the form of the grant following the passage of Hurricane Matthew.

Mount Tabor [his church] is located in the Pinewood Gardens community [Bahamas] and many of the residents there were severely affected by roof damages and flooding, and many were without light and running water for approximately 12-16 days.

On Tuesday, October 11, we visited 505 homes and took to each home a care package containing bread, drinking water, canned goods, rice, grits, cookies, etc. We also had a water truck accompany us to fill up containers of water. This is how we used the funds. No churches benefited as we felt that the “people’s needs” were more important at the time.

Thank you so much for the kind consideration of our people.

Amazed by God’s Grace,

Neil C. Ellis
Presiding Prelate, GUF

As Hurricane Matthew damaged homes and brought devastation to many communities in the U.S. and the Caribbean last fall, The Fellowship reached out in support of our ministry friends who needed to rebuild their communities. We provided $10,000 apiece in emergency relief to four of the largest African-American Christian denominations to help pay for food, medicine, power generators, baby care items, and building and home repair materials for damaged churches and houses. We recently received this moving letter from a denominational leader awarded a Fellowship grant:
Thanks to your faithful support, The Fellowship has been ranked in the Top 400 philanthropic organizations in the United States, according to a report recently released by The Chronicle of Philanthropy, headquartered in Washington, D.C. The Fellowship was ranked at 207 overall, and we are among the top 50 international philanthropies. We continue to thank God for you, our generous Fellowship friends, and for all the lifesaving work around the world your ongoing support allows us to do.

From Our Donors

Thank you so much for your teachings. They warm my heart and lift my soul. Blessings over you, Rabbi Eckstein. May Hashem prosper all you put your hands to do for our people, and may no evil come near your door.

Shalom, Achi
[Peace, my brother].
Veronica, TN

God’s blessings to you, Rabbi Eckstein! May God continue to show His grace for His people and may the spirit lead them. My prayers and blessings are always with you.

Shalom, peace, my brother.

Sincerely,
S.L., CA

People Show Their Love for Israel

The Jerusalem March takes place each year during the Sukkot holiday and attracts participants from around the world. Most of the participants are Christian pilgrims wishing to show their solidarity with the Jewish people and Israel.

This year the Jerusalem March took place on Thursday, October 20, and included more than 10,000 participants. The Fellowship participated by hosting a booth where participants were able to learn more about The Fellowship. Fellowship staff members explained the work we do to build bridges of understanding between Christians and Jews, as well as our many projects to help Holocaust survivors, orphans, and the needy throughout Israel. It was great to make some new Fellowship friends!

The Rabbi Remembers a Great Israeli Leader

“...I thank God for the life of Shimon Peres, and salute his exemplary record of service to our country. May the Jewish people see the day when the peace Peres so earnestly worked for will bloom in their biblical homeland, his beloved land of Israel.

“At times like this, I must remind myself, just as we all must remind ourselves in times of trial, that the Bible promises us that God ‘heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds’ (Psalm 147:3). We cling to this promise, sure in the knowledge that, even in our time of grief, we are not forgotten; He is with us.”

—Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein
Living in Ukraine today isn’t easy. Those living in the middle of the conflict in eastern Ukraine feel trapped in a country with a failing economy and violence on the streets.

Those living elsewhere in the country face equally challenging and desperate situations. This includes many elderly Holocaust survivors who live in Ukraine’s remote cities, where it’s difficult for them to purchase enough heating fuel, food, water, and medicine to survive the brutal Ukrainian winters. The average government pension is only about $40 per month, which isn’t nearly enough.

When Rabbi Eckstein traveled to Ukraine in February 2016, he visited the homes of many elderly Holocaust survivors to deliver food packages. Along the way he noticed how bleak the situation in Ukraine really is. The elderly continue to have to choose between food and heating because they do not have enough money for both.

Thankfully, The Fellowship has not forgotten about these lonely and suffering Holocaust survivors. Thanks to faithful friends of The Fellowship, like you, we continue to visit these elderly survivors to bring them the basic necessities to survive the winter.

It won’t be long before all of those who lived through the Holocaust have passed away. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, Rabbi Eckstein continues to reach out to Ukraine’s Holocaust survivors to personally reassure them they are not alone.
On a trip to the war-torn and economically depressed region, Rabbi Eckstein reminded the impoverished residents that they don’t face their many challenges alone.

The Inestimable Value of Knowing Someone Cares

Nadia’s only hope is in her nut tree outside her dilapidated home. She spends hours cracking nuts so she can trade them for money or bread to eat.

“I prefer to have the money so I can pay for heating and my medications because my pension is not enough,” she said. Nadia has learned to survive with little to no food, but she could never survive the cold winters in Ukraine without winter heating.

The winter also prevents 81-year-old Nadia from retrieving enough fresh water from the pump outside her home. Because the ground usually freezes, she’s afraid she might slip and fall if she walks outdoors. But this means she doesn’t have any water to drink or bathe in. When she does risk going outside to the pump, she’s only able to carry back one pail full of clean water.

When Rabbi Eckstein visited Nadia to bring her a monthly food package, she worried about her appearance. “I am so sorry, I don’t have new clothes and I’m embarrassed that you see me like this,” said Nadia.

“My life was easier during World War II and the Holocaust because then I was younger and I could run and I could flee. Now I feel trapped and alone,” she explained.

Nadia’s statement shows just how difficult her life has become. Her life certainly wasn’t “easy” during WWII. She and her family lived in the same village in Ukraine that Nadia lives in now. When the Nazis came, they escaped into the forest and lived there for years. But the Nazis eventually killed all of her family. Nadia was the only survivor.

“I lost my family and was broken,” she recalled. “I was orphaned.”

More than food and heating, Nadia also needs to know someone cares. Rabbi Eckstein’s visit brought her so much joy, as does the monthly visit from her Fellowship volunteer who brings a care package filled with basic necessities, such as oil, flour, sugar, tea, soap, and toilet paper. We also help her heat her home and bring her fresh water.

Thankfully, because of The Fellowship, Nadia doesn’t have to risk going outdoors in the freezing temperatures, or choose between asking for food or money when she trades the nuts from the tree outside her home. She feels so blessed by Rabbi Eckstein and all of the Christians and Jews around the world who care for her in her old age.
What Am I Going to Forgo?

Every summer, Maria buys less food than she needs so she can save enough money to purchase firewood to heat her home in the winter. Maria, an elderly Holocaust survivor living in Ukraine, has to make such sacrifices because she cannot afford to heat her home during the winter on her meager pension.

When Rabbi Eckstein visited her home to deliver a monthly food package, winter warmth supplies, and other basic necessities, she felt so grateful for his love and support. “Everyone makes choices here about how to try to survive,” Rabbi Eckstein said of impoverished people in the former Soviet Union (FSU). “Some use the little money that they have for medicine, some for water, some for heating fuel, some for medicine. Everyone lives their life on the verge of death and has to decide every day: What am I going to forgo?”

Maria makes other sacrifices besides eating less during the summer. “This woman probably has not had a bath or a shower for I don't know how long,” said Rabbi Eckstein. “She can't afford to use the water for a bath or shower. She drinks it and uses it for cooking.”

Thankfully, *The Fellowship* provides Maria medicine, food, and winter warmth. She is grateful for this loving care from *Fellowship* friends around the world. It is literally her lifeline.

Sleeping on Her Stovetop for Heat

Anna, an 85-year-old Holocaust survivor, sleeps on top of her stove during the day so she can stay warm. She lives on the outskirts of a town in Ukraine and cannot afford both food and heat. Although she has a wood pile that she burns, she can only afford so many logs, so she must ration her stock.

She counts how many days are left of winter to see how many logs she can burn that day. This means that sometimes she only has enough to burn one log for the day. When the fire goes out, she wraps herself in the few blankets she owns and climbs on top of the stove to take advantage of the residual heat for a few hours.

Anna’s bathroom is in her backyard. During the freezing Ukrainian winters, she worries she will slip and fall if she attempts to walk to the outhouse. She doesn’t want to break any of her bones, so, instead, she goes to the bathroom inside her home, which leaves the house smelling terrible.

Anna also lost her entire family during the Holocaust and now lives alone without any friends – except for her *Fellowship* volunteer. Although traveling to Anna’s home takes many hours, as she lives in a remote village, *The Fellowship* knows how important it is to check on Anna and bring her care packages filled with basic necessities.

When Rabbi Eckstein first went to visit Anna to drop off a food package filled with flour, sugar, salt,
and other essentials, she said, “My life is in God’s hands and hopefully God will send more angels like you.”

The Rabbi was touched by this woman’s strong faith in God and her appreciation for even the smallest gift of food. This elderly woman has so little, yet she said to the Rabbi, “I wish I could be able to greet you with a nice dinner.” But she can barely afford food and, prior to receiving food from The Fellowship, lived on potatoes because they are so cheap. Even so, she continued to tell the Rabbi how much she trusts in God. “The Bible gives me strength and inspiration and enables me to have everything that I need here.”

Anna also suffers from poor health and desperately needs medication, but she doesn’t have enough money for it. She’s already lost vision in one eye because she couldn’t afford the medication she needs. Such a faithful woman deserves to have heat during the winter, enough food, and medication for her illnesses.

Thankfully, when The Fellowship learned about her condition, we sent a Fellowship volunteer, who now visits her monthly to bring her medicine, as well as food and firewood to heat her home. Without this monthly visit, Anna wouldn’t survive. We are so glad to help Anna live out her final years knowing she is cared for.

“I’m Alone in the World”

When Rabbi Eckstein walked up the pathway to Sofia’s home, she hurried out the door to embrace him. But as she rushed, she slipped on some ice and injured her hand.

These are the challenges elderly Holocaust survivors, like Sofia, face every day in Ukraine. Sofia’s only source of water is the pump in her backyard, but to fill a bucket with fresh water means she must walk over frozen ground. But she risks falling and injuring herself like she did as she greeted the Rabbi.

Rabbi Eckstein explains the daily struggles for the impoverished elderly in the FSU. “It’s a dangerous situation to go to the bathroom because they have to go outside. And to get water, they have to go outside.”

Unfortunately, Sofia lives alone and doesn’t have any friends or family to help her in her old age. She lost most of her family during the Holocaust and doesn’t have any children to help her. She receives a pension, but it’s so small that she cannot afford both food and heating. So when she opened the package filled with food and other basic necessities from The Fellowship, she kept thanking the Rabbi for his kindness.

“We’re here telling her that she’s not forgotten,” said Rabbi Eckstein, “that we are with her, that she has a friend – a Christian friend, a Jewish friend, in America, in Canada, in different parts of the world – who will stand with her no matter what.”

So many elderly Holocaust survivors wait for care packages from The Fellowship and, thanks to our generous donors, we continue to deliver them throughout the FSU. These care packages not only provide them with sustenance, they also show the elderly, like Sofia, that they are not alone. ■
It was a glorious Tuesday morning in Jerusalem’s Rose Garden, situated right across the street from the Knesset, Israel’s parliament. The sun shone brightly, a steady breeze cooled its rays, and traditional Jewish music filled the air as I approached a welcoming ceremony arranged by The Fellowship to greet the newest arrivals on one of our Freedom Flights.

Waving Israeli flags in the air, The Fellowship’s dedicated Israeli staff, along with Rabbi Eckstein and his wife, Joelle, greeted a busload of new olim (immigrants) who had just arrived in the Holy Land through our On Wings of Eagles program.

A growing number of French Jews are escaping to Israel on Fellowship Freedom Flights, including one family that had a frightening wake-up call.

Fleeing France’s Anti-Semitism

by Ami Farkas
These particular olim came from France and Belgium, Western European countries where many Jews no longer feel safe. These French and Belgian Jews still recall the Holocaust survival stories their parents and grandparents told them, and recognize the implicit warnings within those stories – the signs that Jews are no longer welcome in their home countries and should escape before it’s too late.

Thankfully, for the first time in thousands of years, Jews have come back to the land of their forefathers. No longer a homeless nation and people, we now have a place to go where we can live in safety and freedom.

As the new olim arrived at the ceremony, music echoed through the garden. Rabbi Eckstein and Joelle joined the new Israelis in traditional dancing, while staff members waved Israeli flags in the air. The crowd of new olim was a mix of young people, parents with small children, and elderly couples. They had all just realized their dream to move to Israel and escaped the bitter reality Jews face around the world today.

As the ceremony progressed, I had a chance to talk to some of the new olim, to hear the stories of how they ended up making aliyah (immigrating to Israel).

“When I was a kid, I would come home from school with bruises, torn clothing, busted lips, or a bloodied nose. Being Jewish meant being singled out for abuse,” explained Julien, a new Israeli from France. “I thought it was normal for a Jew to get beat up on a regular basis, and at that time, I didn’t know or believe that Jews can live any differently.”

Eventually, Julien’s parents took him out of public school and sent him to a private Jewish school in Paris. Yet today in Europe anti-Semitism is no longer just an issue of discrimination or bullying. The situation has become extremely dangerous, and Jews fear for their lives.

“I thought it was normal for a Jew to get beat up”

“We knew we had to leave”

Julien’s wife, Sandra, explained that sending kids to a Jewish private school, like the ones she and her husband attended when they were younger, is no longer a solution.

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Eventually, Julien’s parents took him out of public school and sent him to a private Jewish school in Paris. Yet today in Europe anti-Semitism is no longer just an issue of discrimination or bullying. The situation has become extremely dangerous, and Jews fear for their lives.

“We knew we had to leave”

Julien’s wife, Sandra, explained that sending kids to a Jewish private school, like the ones she and her husband attended when they were younger, is no longer a solution.

“As the massacre in Toulouse,” she said, referring to the Islamist terrorist attack that killed a teacher and three students in March 2012 at a Jewish Day School, “Jewish schools in France started hiring private security

“We knew we had to leave”
guards from Israeli security firms to protect the children. But as soon as school is over and the kids are no longer surrounded by armed guards, our children put their skullcaps in their pocket, tuck their Star of David necklaces inside their shirts, and run home as fast as they can.” Sandra’s eyes showed anger at this terrible situation and concern for those still living in France.

The fear and humiliation Julien and Sandra described has enveloped the Jewish communities of Western Europe. “We knew we had to leave, but we had nowhere to turn for answers. We were overwhelmed by the complexities of moving to Israel, what the process would entail, what rights and benefits we would be eligible for. Without someone guiding us, we felt overwhelmed and so we put our aspirations of making aliya on hold,” Sandra explained.

Like so many other Jews who want to make aliya but are intimidated by the idea of picking up and starting over in a country where they do not even speak the language, Julien and Sandra put their dreams on hold and went back to living in fear. However, sometimes God won’t let us close our eyes and resign ourselves to our fate. Sometimes He sends us a wake-up call we cannot ignore.

For Julien and Sandra, that call was an unpleasant one.

“Why does everyone hate us?”

One sunny morning in Paris, Sandra took her daughter to a children’s science museum near the Eiffel Tower where a pro-Palestinian protest was also in progress. As they walked by, demonstrators started shouting, “Death to Jews! Jews to the gas chamber!”

Sandra held her 7-year-old daughter’s hand tightly, and before long they were both crying hysterically. “Mommy, I hate being Jewish!” Sandra’s daughter cried as tears covered her red cheeks. “Why does everyone
hate us? What did we do to them?”

Sandra had no answers, but she knew at that moment they could no longer wait. She came home that day and told Julien, “Whatever it takes, we are moving to Israel!”

Julien and Sandra went to various organizations to try to find information about making aliyah and to see if there was financial assistance for which they might be eligible. Unfortunately, each path led them to a dead end. “No one had answers to our questions, and it seemed as if no one really cared about our plight,” Julien recalled.

Three years passed and the family still lived fearfully in Paris, praying and hoping that someone could help them make it home to Israel.

“With The Fellowship, I’m sure we will make it!”

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors, The Fellowship has been able to extend and expand our On Wings of Eagles program to include more Jews from Western Europe, as well as those from South America.

The Fellowship ran a Facebook campaign informing French Jews about our Freedom Flights to Israel and inviting them to an event where they could meet our representatives. Sandra and Julien got in touch with our representatives, and in only a couple weeks they were already on a Fellowship Freedom Flight to Israel.

“The Fellowship has helped us in every step on our aliyah – finding schools for our kids, paying for our airfare, helping us with money for child care so we can look for work here in Israel,” Sandra explained with a gracious smile.

“With The Fellowship, we have a partner or guardian aiding us each step of the way, giving us the confidence that we can make it in Israel, that we can start again. With The Fellowship on our side, I am sure we will make it!”

As we sat under a makeshift tent in the Jerusalem Rose Garden that morning, Rabbi Eckstein welcomed all the new olim with a heartwarming speech, after which he picked up a guitar and sang a song that echoed the words of the prophets of Israel: “‘Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded,’ declares the LORD. ‘They will return . . .’” (Jeremiah 31:16). Thanks to our faithful Fellowship friends, this prophecy is coming true.

Learn more about The Fellowship’s On Wings of Eagles program and how you can provide aliyah (immigration to Israel) and kitlah (resettlement) assistance to Jews around the world at ifcj.org/GiveWings.
Providing Heat and Hope for a Precious Elderly Couple by Ami Farkas

When two Holocaust survivors couldn’t afford to heat their home, The Fellowship offered a helping hand.

Last year, The Fellowship’s winter heating project warmed the homes of 20,651 elderly citizens across 105 Israeli cities. We focus on the elderly for this project because many senior citizens in Israel live on meager government pensions and are forced to choose between buying food or heating their homes in the winter.

I had the privilege of meeting an elderly couple in northern Israel who received The Fellowship’s winter heating aid. As I walked into their apartment, Asiya, an 80-year-old woman from Ukraine, sat me down next to her husband, Alexander, 78. Immediately, she began telling me how moved she is by the bridges The Fellowship is building between Jews and Christians.

“I know you came to hear my life story and how The Fellowship’s winter heating aid got us through the winter,” Asiya said. “I will get to that! However, I want to start by thanking our Christian friends. Not just for the money they donate to us, without which many of us would be in dire straits, but also for the political and moral support they give to Israel at a time, when, once again, the world is turning against the Jewish people.”

Asiya does not take Christian support for granted. She knows too well what happens when anti-Semitism spreads and there are no voices to oppose it.
Fleeing War

“I was just a little Jewish girl from Kiev who knew nothing about Hitler and his wish to destroy my people when World War II broke out,” Asiya recalled. When Hitler’s army descended on Ukraine, her father and brother were immediately taken to fight in the Red Army. Asiya and her mother fled to the Ural Mountains in Russia, near the border of Kazakhstan, in the former Soviet Union (FSU).

“There was a place of refuge for families whose fathers and sons were fighting in the Red Army,” Asiya recalled. They arrived by train with other families whose fathers were on the frontlines. And as they arrived, the local people began to select families they would host until the fighting subsided.

Word got around that five-year-old Asiya and her mother were Jewish, and so no families wanted to host them. At this time in Russia, Jews were said to be evil. They were robbers and murderers, popular gossip said, and certainly not deserving of anyone’s trust.

“My mother and I stood on the station platform for hours, waiting for someone to adopt us. We hugged each other tightly so we would not freeze, as tears streamed down our faces.”

Thankfully, late in the evening a woman named Anna finally picked them up out of pure pity.

The Prejudice Continues

“At first Anna didn’t trust us, and though she had a kind heart, she, too, fell prey to the horrible rumors and libels that had been spread about Jews for centuries,” Asiya recalled. Anna kept them in the attic and locked them in their room every night out of fear. It took a long time before Anna started to trust Asiya and her mom, no longer fearing they might steal her belongings or murder her son in the middle of the night.
It seems like a lifetime ago, but Asiya still recalls how at the tender age of five she did not understand why all the Russian kids hated her so much. Every time she would go outside to play, the other kids would yell, “Jew, Jew, dirty Jew,” and then they would kick her, spit on her, and knock her down.

“I didn’t know what Jew meant. Can you believe that?” Asiya said with a sad voice. “Since I didn’t know Jew wasn’t a universal term, I started cursing other kids in return, saying, ‘You’re a Jew. You’re a dirty Jew.’”

Seeing the sadness in her eyes as the trauma from her past began to resurface, I offered Asiya a cup of water to give her a small break. With shaking hands, she recited the traditional blessing, took a sip, and continued with her story.

“For the entire duration of the war, Anna let us stay in her home. In return, we took care of the housework, barn work, cooking, and cleaning. Although it was difficult, it saved our life.”

Beating the Odds

The war eventually ended, yet the discrimination and venomous hatred of Jews did not. Nonetheless, Asiya and her mother were no longer passive survivors. They had learned how to become fighters, and somehow, they managed to thrive in a hostile environment.

They eventually returned to Ukraine where, against all odds and with lots of determination, Asiya received an education – and even made it all the way to university, which is a miracle, considering how Jews rarely received entry into colleges and universities.

“I received a doctorate in Mathematics. No one believed this was possible for a Jewish girl from Ukraine, but I did it!”

Asiya eventually moved to Riga, Latvia, in the FSU, where she met her husband, Alexander. The situation in Riga was better than in Ukraine and Russia. “The Latvians resented the Russians to such a degree that they ignored the Jews,” Asiya explained.

Asiya became a university professor and raised a family with Alexander. And though life was quiet and stable, they dreamed and prayed daily to return home to Zion. “The Iron Curtain placed an unmovable barrier between us and our dream to make aliyah [immigrate to Israel],” but as soon as the curtain came down, Jews began to migrate home to Israel.

Asiya’s two daughters, who now had families of their own, made their way to Israel the first chance they got. For Asiya, it was hard to give up her pension, which she had worked her entire adult life to earn. “I knew that the minute I immigrated to Israel I would lose everything I worked for, including my pension. How would we survive? How would we make it?”

Finally Home, Finally Hopeful

In the end, Asiya and Alexander decided that they would rather be poor in Israel than comfortable in another country, that there are more important things in life than money. Currently, Asiya and Alexander live on a fixed Israeli government pension, which barely covers food, rent, and utilities.

“Unfortunately, heating became an expense we simply could not afford, and so we bundled up and learned how to live through the cold winter months,” Asiya explained. Then she turned her sad, but compassionate gaze to Alexander, who sat quietly throughout the entire interview. “But my dear husband, who has always been there for me, is not well, and I worried in the beginning of the winter that he would not make it through another cold season bundled up in our freezing apartment.”

Alexander doesn’t speak Hebrew very well and has lost much of his memory, but his gentle, warm demeanor speaks volumes about his character. “The Fellowship’s winter heating aid saved my husband’s life this winter. The cold would have destroyed his already failing health. I cannot thank you enough. God bless The Fellowship and the donors who support people like me and Alexander.”

As I left Asiya and Alexander’s apartment, Asiya proudly pointed to their family pictures on the wall. I looked at the pictures of their daughters, as well as their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and thought about what a treasure this elderly couple is. I imagined all they have been put through and what they’ve achieved despite hardships, and I felt immensely blessed to be part of The Fellowship’s ministry, which brings aid to such precious people.
Many supporters of The Fellowship like you have resolved that 2017 will be the year – and January will be the month – they put plans in place for a secure future. Are you thinking about ways to provide a solid financial foundation for your family while also leaving a legacy of your love for Israel and the Jewish people? There’s no better moment than today to act, and we can help you get started!

It’s easier than you may think to do good for others through your estate plan – in the form of a properly prepared last will and testament or living trust. Here are four benefits you will enjoy.

- **SECURITY** Few things are more important – or a greater blessing – than knowing your plans are in place for the future. It’s one of the kindest gifts you can ever give to your loved ones.
- **SIMPLICITY** Some people think preparing a will or living trust is complicated. It doesn’t have to be … and what’s truly complicated is sorting things out when there is no plan. Let us show you, step by step, how simple it can be.
- **SAVINGS** A well-crafted plan will preserve your hard-earned assets so that less will go to the government or lawyers later – leaving more for your family and the causes you care about.
- **FLEXIBILITY** “What if my circumstances change in the future?” That question stops many people in their tracks, but it’s a concern easily addressed. A will or living trust is a very flexible document which can be amended by you if family situations or personal needs should change in the future.

As you plan, we hope you will prayerfully consider a gift to The Fellowship in your will or living trust. We can show you how to include a charitable gift in your plans even while making sure your family is taken care of first.
I met her months ago, but still can’t get her out of my heart.

I was in Jerusalem, the holiest city in the world, at a Fellowship-sponsored soup kitchen packed with people of all ages and backgrounds. The truth is, I loved each of the people standing in that room. I hugged the adorable child with black curly hair and offered her a baguette, smiled at the homeless man as I placed a large spoonful of roasted vegetables on his plate, and helped the old woman with a walker carry her plate to the table.

But then Chana walked in, and immediately my heart connected with hers. It was like going to one of my daughter’s gymnastics shows – although there are dozens of cute children performing, the only one I really see is my beloved child.

I felt like I was seeing a long-lost family member for the first time. She was holding on to the wall, limping on unsteady legs. She had green eyes and a lined face that spoke of the hardships she has endured. Just by looking at her I could tell her mind was still sharp. I thought she looked like an angel.

A Long Journey

I asked another volunteer to take over serving the food to the long line of people waiting, and I gravitated straight to Chana.

“Shalom,” I said, placing my hand on her shoulder.

“Shalom,” she said, with a warm yet exhausted smile. Chana used my arm for balance as we sat down at the closest table.

“Where did you come from?” I asked.
“Talpiot,” she said, as she took a napkin and wiped the sweat from her forehead with a shaky hand. Her answer shocked me; Talpiot is an hour-long bus ride from the center of Jerusalem where we were sitting.

“Why did you come all the way here?” I asked.

And after a moment of silence, Chana looked at the line of people waiting for a warm meal and said, “Because I have to eat.”

I wanted to hear Chana’s story, but it was clear that until she had a plate of food in front of her, she would be unable to relax. I immediately got her a big plate of vegetables, rice, meat, a bowl of soup, and a challah roll.

“Wow, so much food,” she said.

When she thought I wasn’t looking, she put half of the food in a Tupperware container she had brought in her purse. I have seen others do the same, explaining, “So that I’ll have food for tomorrow.” Although Chana obviously didn’t want to speak about it, I know that’s what she was thinking, too.

“It’s Hard, but It’s Home”

I sat with Chana for an hour, captivated by her amazing life story, hugging her when the tears began to fall and speaking words of encouragement to her at every opportunity.

Chana is an 89-year-old widow who made aliyah (immigrated to Israel) 10 years ago. “I had dreamed about returning to the Holy Land my entire life,” she said.

“Is it really better here?” I asked, looking at the strangers in the soup kitchen with whom Chana eats her lunch every day.

“It’s hard here. But it’s home,” she said, and kissed the table in front of her.

Chana came to Israel with just the clothes on her back. She had no savings, bank account, or pension fund. She has lived the past 10 years on around $500 a month in government aid, and will live on that tiny stipend until she dies.

But Chana has a grateful heart, free of animosity, anger, or hate.

Every day, Chana takes the hour-long bus ride from Talpiot to the center of Jerusalem to have her only warm meal of the day at the Fellowship-sponsored soup kitchen.

“Getting my food here enables me to pay my electric bill and buy the medication I need,” Chana told me with a smile, while tightening her grip on my hand, which she lovingly held for the entire hour we spoke. Instinctively, I hugged her.

A Lasting Lesson

When she had finished eating, I walked her outside, and it was difficult not to cry as we said goodbye, knowing that she was going back to an empty house with no one to love or listen to her.

But my comfort was in the knowledge that she indeed has a safety net and a place to turn in her time of need. The soup kitchen is open six days a week, with warm, healthy, delicious food, and caring volunteers who will never turn a blind eye to Chana’s, or anyone else’s, pleas.

Chana thanked me profusely for sitting with her during lunch and giving her so much joy. But in reality, it was she who touched me, more than she can ever know. Two months later, I still pray for and think of Chana, who reminded me that the greatest gift we can give a person is often a simple meal, an open ear, and a loving heart.
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Tzadakah: Righteous Giving

“Tzedakah, commonly defined as the Jewish term for charity, is actually a very different concept from what we typically associate with altruistic giving. The word ‘charity’ implies giving by people who have wealth to those who are impoverished as an act of loving-kindness. However, in the Jewish tradition, tzedakah is not rooted in kindness. Instead, it comes from the Hebrew word tzedek, meaning justice. This linguistic relationship teaches us the great fundamental concept about Jewish giving: it’s not an act of charity; it’s an act of righteousness.

It may even be counterintuitive that charity is rooted in justice. We might think that because we have worked for our money we should decide what to do with it. If we choose to share it with others, that should be our decision. If we choose to spend it on ourselves, that should also be up to us. However, that isn’t how God designed the world. The word tzedakah is actually two words put together – tzedek, meaning “justice,” and kah, which is a name for God. Together these words mean “the justice of God.”

Based on this understanding, let’s take a look at what giving is really about when we bring God into the equation. The first step is to realize that everything belongs to God. “The silver is mine and the gold is mine.” (Haggai 2:8). Everything that we possess – from the wealth that we attain, to the talents and circumstances that allowed us to acquire it – are all gifts from God.

God has given us all that we have in order that we might use our resources appropriately. While we are encouraged to enjoy God’s gifts, we are also commanded to give to the poor. “If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner or a stranger, so they can continue to live among you.” — Leviticus 25:35

If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you.” — Leviticus 25:35

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Rabbi Eckstein

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A New Year’s Day terror attack last year stirred memories and fears for a Fellowship staffer.

LOVE AND FEAR FOR ISRAEL

By Eva Geller

It has been a year since a horrific attack struck Tel Aviv. A Palestinian terrorist opened fire on several businesses in the bustling Israeli city, killing three and wounding seven more. A nationwide manhunt for the shooter took a week before he was found and stopped. But his crime – just one of far too many that have afflicted Israel during the year-and-a-half terror wave still gripping the nation and its people – not only affected those in Israel, but also those who were abroad when they occurred. Eva Geller, a Fellowship staff member based in Israel, was traveling in London at the time, and wrote of the fear that grips the Holy Land’s people whenever and wherever they are targeted by evil.

I log onto Facebook and see a newsflash about a terrorist attack, about people injured on Dizengoff Street in Tel Aviv. The news reports come fast and furiously, from every direction – the number of people injured, the terrorist that escaped, the panic, the trauma.

A day passes and the terrorist has not been found. Another day and the heartrending stories and eulogies of the wounded and the dead shatter my heart and soul. Yet another day and still the terrorist has not been caught. In the meantime, more and more stabbing attacks in Jerusalem, the Holy City and capital of Israel. And the terrorist still has not been caught.

Meanwhile in London, I am on vacation, trying to enjoy myself. But my heart is in Israel. I am crying with the pain of Tel Aviv, of the whole Jewish state.

I sit in a café with a big television screen and there is a newsflash that announces that the New Year’s Eve celebrations in Brussels have been cancelled because of warnings of terrorist attacks. My friends in Paris tell me of empty streets. Now everyone is experiencing the same lack of personal security, the same lack of national security that Israel experiences every day. How sad that evil and extremism have taken over.

I think back to the summer of 2002. I was in high school and spent the summer in the United States with my family. We woke up one morning and the television was talking about a murderous attack in a restaurant in downtown Jerusalem. Fewer people had cellphones then, and my anxiety ran high. Where were my friends? Were people I knew murdered? The images on the television were shocking – 15 people killed and dozens more wounded. It was impossible to absorb. It was the reality of the Second Intifada: suicide bombers causing grief throughout the city.

Five days have passed now, with Israeli forces still searching for the Tel Aviv terrorist. It does not look like we are getting anywhere, so we simply move on. The stories of the terror victims, of blessed memory, prove to us again and again that we are a special and strong nation; we love life and pursue justice.

But I keep asking, when will peace and tranquility come to our nation? And when will we feel like a free nation in our own land?

I want to walk from the parking lot to my house without apprehension, to walk around the Old City of Jerusalem without fear, to sit in a café without the anxiety that a terrorist will begin to shoot in every direction.

But still we Israelis travel around, go places, and enjoy what this country has to offer us. Both of these feelings – fear and love – are Israel’s reality.

What Happened?

On January 1, 2016, an Israeli Arab man pulled a submachine gun out of his bag and opened fire on a sushi restaurant, a café, and a bar just before 3:00 p.m. in Tel Aviv. He killed two people – 26-year-old Alon Bakal, the manager of the bar, and 30-year-old Shimon Raimi, a patron at the bar – and then fled the scene in a taxi. The driver, Amin Shaaban, was later found murdered as well. The gunman was later identified as Nashat Milhem, an Israeli Arab who appeared to be inspired by ISIS. He was shot and killed by Israeli forces in an exchange of gunfire a week later.
ANGELS

God’s Mysterious Messengers

Who are these celestial beings and what purpose does God have for them in our life?
Every night when I put my children to bed, I sing them lullabies and, like many Jewish mothers around the globe, I sing them traditional Hebrew songs about angels. We sing and pray that the four archangels – Michael, angel of mercy; Gabriel, angel of strength; Uriel, angel of light; and Raphael, angel of healing – surround our sweet little ones as they go to sleep.

I’ll sing a song with words from the patriarch Jacob when he blessed Joseph’s sons: “the Angel who has delivered me from all harm – may he bless these boys . . .” (Genesis 48:16). This is how we send our children, and ourselves, off to sleep – with thoughts of angels, guarding and protecting us.

Yet, when it comes to angels, everyone envisions them slightly differently. For some, angels are chubby, child-like creatures with wings. To others, angels look like people. In the Bible, angels are often described as fiery beings or as terrifying apparitions.

However, while we all have an idea of what an angel might look like, no one in our time has actually, knowingly, seen an angel. No one really knows what angels look like or what they really do. Angels belong to a different realm – to the world of the spirit, a world beyond us all.

Yet, clearly God wanted us to know about angels – to know that they exist. Angels are mentioned throughout the Bible – from the angel who stood guard at the Garden of Eden with a fiery sword, to the three angels who visited Abraham with good news about the pending birth of Isaac. It was an angel who stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, and another angel who rescued Hagar and Ishmael in the desert. The list goes on and on.

Moreover, in Judaism, we mention angels every single day in our prayers. We speak of them every night before we go to sleep. On the Sabbath, our tradition is that angels accompany us home from the synagogue, and our Sabbath meal begins by welcoming God’s angels.

So why does God want us to know about these invisible celestial beings that we cannot speak to or recognize? According to the Jewish sages, the answer is simple: God wants us to know about
If you have ever had the suspicion that a person you encountered was an angel in disguise, you are not alone. We need not look any further than Genesis 18 to see that, indeed, angels can disguise themselves as people and pay us a visit when we need it the most.

In the beginning of Chapter 18, we find Abraham sitting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. What makes this noteworthy is that Abraham had just undergone circumcision three days earlier at the age of 99! The Jewish sages comment that the third day after any operation or injury is always the most difficult.

In fact, when the Bible tells us that Abraham sat in the heat of the day, it is also teaching us that God had made the day unusually hot because He didn’t want any visitors bothering Abraham while he recovered. However, Abraham, who was known for his hospitality and kindness, found the lack of visitors even more painful than circumcision.

So Abraham sat at the entrance of his tent looking and hoping for visitors. When God saw how much Abraham desired to be hospitable, He sent him three angels.

The sages teach that angels are able to “dress up” or disguise themselves as people. In this case, Abraham had no idea that his visitors were actually angels. The Bible refers to them as men, and Abraham treats them as such. Full of joy, he washed their feet and prepared them a feast. Obviously, angels have no need for any of the things that Abraham did for them, but Abraham desired to give, and so they graciously received his generosity.

However, giving Abraham an opportunity to perform loving-kindness was not the only purpose of the angels. According to Jewish tradition, each angel can have only one mission. These three angels had three unique purposes: One was sent to heal Abraham; one was sent to tell Abraham and Sarah the good news that they would have a child in their old age; and the final angel was sent to destroy Sodom after visiting Abraham. Although the angels looked like men, they were God’s divine messengers, making Abraham’s life a little more joyful and carrying out God’s plan.

God does send us His angels. Sometimes we can see them, and sometimes we cannot. Sometimes we may know we are dealing with a supernatural being, but more often than not, we are not aware. The Bible only refers to the men who visited Abraham as angels in Chapter 19, once they had left Abraham and had arrived in Sodom. Perhaps Abraham never even knew there had been angels in his home. And perhaps we, too, have been visited by angels though we never knew it either.

The most common Hebrew word for angels is the word malach, which also can mean “messenger.” This is because the clearest definition of an angel is a messenger of God. Angels function as God’s army of helpers, and they are charged with guiding, protecting, challenging, and helping human beings. As it says in Psalm 91:11, “For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways . . . .”

If you have ever felt alone, forgotten, or forsaken, knowing that angels walk among us will fill you with hope, peace, and gratitude. We are not alone. And while God is our ultimate Savior, He sends legions of His angels to assist us every single day.

ANGELS in Disguise
BY RABBI YECHIEL ECKSTEIN

“Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.” — Genesis 18:2

If you have ever had the suspicion that a person you encountered was an angel in disguise, you are not alone. We need not look any further than Genesis 18 to see that, indeed, angels can disguise themselves as people and pay us a visit when we need it the most.

In the beginning of Chapter 18, we find Abraham sitting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. What makes this noteworthy is that Abraham had just undergone circumcision three days earlier at the age of 99! The Jewish sages comment that the third day after any operation or injury is always the most difficult.

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However, giving Abraham an opportunity to perform
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During my travels through the U.S. last fall, I learned how deeply and profoundly Americans have been affected by the most recent presidential election. People of all political persuasions were glued to televisions and computers waiting for the results.

Weeks later, they were still glued to their screens, reading the opinions of politicians and pundits as they discussed how then President-elect Donald Trump’s policies may change the country and the world. Of course, it is good and right to be concerned about politics. But there comes a time that we must tear ourselves away from our screens and focus on deeper things.

For me, the Psalms have a wonderful way of putting things in perspective, giving me a deeper, more complete view of the challenges we face, both personally and as a nation. Perhaps it’s their honesty – their willingness to address God personally in both good times and bad – that has brought me back to these ancient Hebrew prayers time and again.

A Sobering Reminder

The psalmist sings praises to God’s glory, cries out to Him from the depths of his despair, laments what he believes to be God’s absence from his life, and even freely expresses his doubts before God. And the Psalms don’t just voice our emotions; they remind us of God’s character. In them, we come to know God as Creator, Sustainer, Healer, and Redeemer.

Psalm 76 serves as a sobering reminder of God’s power. It leaves

“LORD, our LORD, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”
Psalm 8:1
no question that it is indeed God alone who rules the earth! The psalmist speaks of the invincibility of God in battle, and the futility of trying to stand against Him and His chosen land of Israel.

Psalm 76 reassures the people of Israel that they can take great comfort and have confidence in God as their Defender – and yet, they must remember that He is to be feared and worshipped: “let all the neighboring lands bring gifts to the One to be feared” (Psalm 76:11).

Childlike Awe and Wonder

Psalm 8 begins and ends by ascribing to God the highest praise. In verses 1 and 9 the writer, identified in the superscript as King David, used the personal name of God that God gave to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14) – Yahweh, the God of Israel’s covenant.

God’s majestic name is wonderfully appropriate to this psalm. God is personal in His interaction with His creation, being mindful of mankind and caring for us – and yet, He is also the Master of creation who rules over all.

The psalm moves from earth to heaven, from God to His people, and back again. We are to have a childlike sense of awe and wonder when it comes to the display of God’s glory. His great love for mankind is shown in that He cared enough to place us just underneath the angels in terms of rank in creation. Verse 9 ends the psalm the way it started, extolling the Lord’s majesty.

Divine Perspective

It’s all too easy to become so immersed in the things of the world that we forget that God is our ultimate defender and protector. But these psalms remind us to have the proper attitude when coming before God.

It is both exhilarating and humbling to know that He goes ahead of us in our challenges, and that we are objects of His affection and care. May we always be awed by the things of God. And may we always be reminded of God’s power and His sovereignty over all things.
One Thursday night, after a long day of working and then volunteering in the center of the city, I couldn’t wait to get home.

I planned to take the bus back to my home in south-central Jerusalem, but soon realized that my bus fare card was completely empty. After searching through my purse, I realized that I didn’t have any cash to pay for my bus ride. I was exhausted – and now disheartened.

It was late, and I just wanted to get home. I hoped someone on the bus would lend me the money because I didn’t think the driver would let me on the bus without paying.

In my kindest voice, I said to the driver, “I’m sorry, but it’s late and I want to go home. Maybe one of the passengers can lend me the bus fare?”

To my utter surprise, the driver responded, “No problem; you can pay twice the next time you get on a bus.” I was relieved and grateful to finally be heading home after a long day.

An unexpected Connection

But as I started looking for a seat on the bus, the driver happened to ask, “Where do you work?”

I explained that I work for a nonprofit, humanitarian aid organization called the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews.

With a knowing smile, the driver replied, “You see, I owe you. My wife received financial assistance from The Fellowship after she was injured in a terror attack.”

I was floored by his words. What were the odds of him having a connection to The Fellowship? I felt truly touched by the bus driver’s kindness and was inspired by his support and gratitude for The Fellowship.

When I commented that I was amazed to meet him, he responded, “What’s amazing is the work The Fellowship does in Israel.”

Then bus passengers began to ask me questions about The Fellowship and our aid to terror victims, so I told them about the work The Fellowship does across Israel. I explained that we reach out to all Israelis who have suffered a terror attack, like their bus driver and his family, by giving $1,000 grants to each victim to help pay for the unanticipated costs of healing.

Bringing Hope

Moments like these make me and other Fellowship staff members feel truly blessed to work for such an impactful organization that reaches out to people all across Israel. This unexpected moment reminded me that the work The Fellowship does every day to protect and provide for Israel and her people really does matter.

It’s amazing how The Fellowship has influenced so many people. It seems as if every other person we meet has either been assisted by or knows someone who has been helped by The Fellowship. We as a staff need to remember this on a daily basis when we come to work. We should always think about the ways we’re touching so many people.

I went home that night feeling an extra level of excitement about my work with The Fellowship, where I can help bring hope to those who have nowhere else to turn. I’m extremely proud to work here!
MAY IT EVER WAVE

The Fellowship recently hosted a welcome reception for new olim (immigrants) who arrived in Israel on Fellowship Freedom Flights from France. Held the day after a seminar on transitioning to their new life in the Holy Land, the reception was at Jerusalem’s Rose Garden and attended by The Fellowship’s entire Israel staff. The new olim enjoyed music, dancing, blessings, lunch, and gifts. Two of the younger attendees got the added bonus of sitting next to Rabbi Eckstein, who helped them grasp the joy and the pride to be found in the flag of their new country and spiritual homeland.
The start of a new year is the perfect time to begin your own spiritual journey with the shared insights and meditations from Rabbi Eckstein and Christian theologian Dr. Tremper Longman III. In *The One Year® Holy Land Moments Devotional*, each daily reading offers a fascinating glimpse into Jewish faith, history, and perspectives, as well as the Christian interpretation of beloved biblical verses and events.

When you spend a reflective moment each day contemplating the history of God’s work in the world, you’ll gain a greater understanding of Christianity’s deep roots in the land, events, people, and faith of Israel.

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Work of the Heart

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I pray this letter finds you enjoying a blessed start to 2017!

As we start this new year, I can’t help but reflect on all we were able to accomplish in 2016 thanks to your faithful support. We brought thousands of new olim (immigrants) to Israel on Fellowship Freedom Flights, provided for Israeli victims of terror attacks, and gave lifesaving food, medicine, shelter, and companionship to Jews in need throughout the Holy Land and the former Soviet Union.

You made all of this great work possible and I cannot overstate my gratitude for your partnership in this mission.

Sadly, the huge needs among these same communities continue into 2017. As you will read in the enclosed issue, Jews experiencing anti-Semitism in countries such as France are so grateful to escape on our Freedom Flights. The Holocaust survivors I visited in Ukraine last winter are still utterly dependent on us to keep them alive through these frigid winter months.

And terror attacks continue to threaten the lives and well-being of Israelis simply longing for a normal life in their spiritual homeland.

While it would be easy to get discouraged by these huge needs, I am certain of two things that give me hope: our faithful God, and you, our faithful donors.

It is always a privilege to share with you what your partnership has accomplished. I hope that seeing the fruit of our ministry in these pages will encourage your heart as much as it has mine, and will inspire you to continue to partner with us in this lifesaving ministry.

Shalom!

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein
Founder and President

My Prayerful Gift for Needy Jews Around the World!

Yes! Rabbi Eckstein, I want to provide lifesaving food, medicine, shelter, and companionship to Jews in need throughout the Holy Land and around the world! Here is my gift of:

$XXX  $YYY  $ZZZ  $__________  for
  Where Needed Most  On Wings of Eagles  Isaiah 58  Guardians of Israel

  I have included my check in the enclosed envelope.
  I have included my credit card information below.
  I want to become a monthly Friend of The Fellowship partner.

Account#   DMX1701XCEXXX       9999

Please Place a Single or Monthly Donation on My Credit Card:

☐ This single gift in the amount of $ ________________________________

☐ Please make this a monthly gift of $ ________________________________

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Print your name as it appears on your card

Authorized signature

Mr. TJH Winter/January 2017
6404 International Pkwy
Suite 2020
Plano, Texas 75093

The Fellowship fulfills the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance’s twenty rigorous standards. More information is available at ifcj.org

For important updates regarding Israel, go to ifcj.org/SignUp to receive IFCJ’s eNewsletter, or include your email address here:

EMAIL
Thank you! Your IFCJ gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.
Dear John,

I am delighted to send you this winter issue of The Journey magazine!

I have not heard from you in a few months and wanted to reach out to express my appreciation for your past support – and share what we have been doing lately. I hope the stories of the lives that we have rescued will encourage and inspire you to re-commit to bless Israel and the Jewish people.

There are two quotes in this magazine I would like to point out, as I think they underscore the importance of the work we do. The first was blurted out by a 7-year-old girl as she and her mother fled a crowd of angry protestors shouting “Death to Jews!” in their Paris neighborhood. As they rushed from the scene, the young girl cried to her equally frightened mother, “Why does everyone hate us?”

It’s hard to believe that this kind of virulent anti-Semitism still exists. But the increasing requests from Jews in peril around the world hoping to make aliya (immigrate to Israel) on a Fellowship Freedom Flight prove that, tragically, it certainly does. I am grateful that, due to the generosity of our donors, we have been able to expand our aliya program so that in 2016 alone we brought Jews to Israel from 20 different countries. The needs are real and rising, and we hope we will continue to be able to meet them.

The other quote I don’t want you to miss was uttered by Anna, an 85-year-old Holocaust survivor who lives in a remote village in Ukraine. I had the privilege of visiting Anna’s humble home, which she often heats with only one small log a day in her wood-burning stove. That’s all this destitute woman can afford. When the final embers burn out, she wraps herself in a blanket and climbs on top of the stove to make the most of the residual heat.

When I delivered her a care package of basic foods, she replied, “My life is in God’s hands and hopefully God will send more angels like you.” While her words moved me, they weren’t entirely accurate. The angels are our donors, people like you who have a compassionate heart for Israel and her people and who take seriously the biblical command to “spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed” (Isaiah 58:10).

I hope that seeing the fruit of our ministry in these pages will encourage your heart as much as it has mine, and will inspire you to resume your partnership with The Fellowship in our lifesaving work. If you do, we would be happy to continue sending you The Journey magazine so you can see the difference you are making. Won’t you consider renewing your support now with a $100 gift – or whatever amount God places on your heart – to help ensure that The Fellowship’s lifesaving work can continue and that we won’t have to turn away any who come to us for vital assistance?

With your help, we will be able to keep offering frightened young girls and freezing elderly women – along with so many others – the aid they desperately need, and reassuring them that they do not face their struggles alone.

With prayers for shalom, peace,

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein
Founder and President
TO PROVIDE RESCUE AND COMPASSIONATE CARE

Rabbi Yechezkel Eckstein
INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS
P.O. Box 96105
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20090-6105