

A P R I L 2 0 1 7

BRINGING NEW LIFE TO THE LOST SHEEP *of* ISRAEL

Update on Ministry in the Holy Land

*...but rather go to the lost
sheep of the house of Israel.
– Matthew 10:6*



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Introduction



To reach these “lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 10:6), Mission Eurasia has been partnering with Living Israel since 2014 to provide training for church-planting and other strategic ministry outreaches to the Russian-Jewish community. This update has been prepared **to thank you for your generous investment in Mission Eurasia’s ministry to Russian-speaking Jews in Israel this past year**, and to show the many encouraging ways that your partnership is helping to bring new life to God’s chosen people in the Holy Land.

A mass exodus of Russian-speaking Jewish people from the Soviet Union to Israel began in the late 1980s under the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev.

Today, Israel has a core Russian-Jewish population of 900,000, which is more than the total number of Russian-Jewish people still living in Russia. Of this number, more than 98% are non-Christians.

The Russian-speaking Jewish community in Israel is unique because, for the most part, it lives in a cultural bubble and practices neither Judaism nor Christianity. As a result, many Russian-Jewish youth have no moral or spiritual compass and are struggling with alcoholism, drug addiction, and other destructive behaviors. Despite the extremely hostile environment for Christians in Israel, this situation has created a unique opportunity to present the gospel to the Russian-Jewish community living there.

A movement called Living Israel was started in 1995 for this purpose, basing its mission on Matthew 10:6: “Go to the lost sheep of Israel.” Living Israel began with the vision of several young believers from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus who dramatically embraced Yeshua as their Messiah and wanted to plant several home churches in a Haifa suburb, densely populated with Russian Jews. These young men—Gleb Samburskiy, Mikhail Sadovskiy, and Veniamin Sadovskiy—are now the leaders of Living Israel. Their strategic concept spread quickly, and within three years, 15 more home churches were formed.


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Living Israel – School Without Walls

Through our School Without Walls (SWW) non-formal leadership training program, Mission Eurasia is partnering with Living Israel to train young leaders to reach the Russian-Jewish community through a variety of strategic ministry initiatives. During the past year, a total of 91 SWW students received training in the following three areas: biblical studies (four months), ministry outreach (four months), and practical ministry experience serving Russian-Jewish communities in Israel (four months).

Biblical topics that SWW students in Israel study include a number of subjects specifically geared toward the Jewish population in Israel, such as: *Heroes of the Faith from the Old and New Testaments*; *Spiritual Formation*; *Prayer and Fasting in the Life of the Christian*; *Evangelistic Ministry: Strategy and Methods*.

During the ministry training phase of the School Without Walls program, students received practical ministry training in at least one of the following three areas:

- ▶ Evangelistic outreach in Jewish communities, including street evangelism and Scripture distribution, as well as youth clubs
- ▶ Outreach to those in need, including Holocaust survivors and drug addicts
- ▶ Outreach in cities with no Christian presence, including Safed and Be'er Ya'akov

Finally, after graduating from the program, young, trained leaders are placed in ministries serving the Russian-Jewish population in Israel and beyond.

Mission Eurasia is currently helping Living Israel organize even more SWW training lessons and seminars, provide guidance for teachers, and develop effective training materials.



As a result of your generous investment in SWW, a total of 50 students graduated from the program in 2016. A video of our ministry with Living Israel, including the SWW graduation celebration from last year, can be accessed at this link: bit.ly/SWW_Israel

Church-Planting Ministries



One of the main ministry programs in which our School Without Walls students and graduates are involved is forming new home Bible study groups.

From these home groups, new congregations for Russian-speaking Jewish people are formed. During the past year, Mission Eurasia partnered with Living Israel through School Without Walls to start 17 new home Bible study groups, each with an average of 3-15 people. From these home Bible study groups, a total of six new Christian congregations were formed in the cities of Rishon LeZion (where 50% of the population is Russian-Jewish), Jerusalem, and Beersheba, with a total of 157 members. These churches are committed to studying Scripture and sharing their faith in their work places, as well as with their families, friends, and neighbors. The members of these newly formed churches also believe that the gospel should be shared, not only with Russian-speaking Jews, but also with Hebrew-speaking Jews.



Reaching Victims of the Holocaust

Ministering to survivors of the Holocaust in Israel is a practical way to share God's love with those who have suffered so much.

That's why School Without Walls students continue to be actively involved in serving approximately 1,000 elderly Holocaust survivors (75-95 years old) and their families in the cities of Haifa, Afula, Kiryat Shmona, Rishon LeZion, and other locations. Thanks to your generous support of our partnership with Living Israel, these young leaders carry out this ministry by delivering groceries to those in need, holding prayer meetings in their homes, organizing special holiday celebrations, delivering gifts during Hanukkah and Passover, and visiting Holocaust survivors in nursing homes. Through all of these efforts, our SWW students serve as the hands and feet of Jesus to these survivors of one of the worst atrocities in human history.



Stories of Holocaust Survivors

"When we deliver food packs to Holocaust survivors, they are so excited to see us, and most of them ask us to pray for them. Many of them also share that prayer is the only reason they have survived so long, and they gladly accept when we offer to pray with them."

– Katya, 2016 SWW graduate

"During our meetings, we never hide the fact that they were organized by evangelicals. All Jewish people know it is important to be merciful and selfless, and because the Holocaust survivors we work with spent a long time in the former Soviet Union before moving to Israel, they aren't afraid of Christians. They also know that Mission Eurasia/Living Israel is made up of caring people who want to help them whenever needed."

– Marina, coordinator for ministry to Holocaust survivors

"Many nursing home residents come to know their Savior before they die by witnessing the sacrificial service of the School Without Walls students."

– Benjamin, SWW student

"Holocaust survivors are very optimistic and have a deep appreciation for life. Even though they suffered so much in the concentration camps, they are joyful and appreciate every day they've been given, which, I think, is why they live longer. But what I find most inspiring is that, while Holocaust survivors are elderly themselves, they are still willing to help others. And because these elderly people are so willing to support one another, we feel inspired to use our own time and energy to serve those in need, and we can already see the fruits of our ministry."

– Pastor Gleb




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Reaching Children and Youth with God's Love



Summer Bible Day Camps

In July 2016, Mission Eurasia and Living Israel organized their first summer Bible day camps for youth outreach in Israel. At camp, these young people learned about God their Creator and Yeshua the Messiah through Bible study, worship, and sports. Even though most of these young people already had some understanding of Jewish religious law, many were introduced to a personal relationship with the living God for the first time in their lives. And, in addition to learning about having a relationship with God, these youth also learned how to build strong relationships and serve one another, following Jesus' teaching that it is greater to serve than to be served (Matthew 20:28). On the last day of camp, three young people who had accepted Christ as their personal Savior were baptized in the Jordan River. This first camp model proved to be so successful that plans are underway to hold seven summer Bible day camps in five different cities this summer for 35-40 youth each, impacting a total of approximately 260 youth.





Story of Roman

"My name is Roman and I was born in Israel to a family that didn't know God. My father was a drug addict, and when I was only a few months old, he left my mother and me and moved to Eilat, Israel's southernmost city. Later, I learned that he justified leaving by saying that he didn't want his son to know his terrible father. In fact, I didn't know my father was a drug addict for 10 years. I actually didn't even know that he was still alive."

"When I was 10, my father called me for the very first time."

He said, 'Son, you don't know me, but I'm your father. I've been a horrible father, because I've never paid attention to you, but I recently became a new person. God changed me.' That was also the first time I ever heard about God. It turned out that when my father was dying on the street from a drug overdose, someone found him and took him to a rehabilitation center. Christians were visiting the rehabilitation center, and it was there that God transformed my father's heart.

"That summer, my mother sent me to visit my father in Eilat. Even though she had already remarried, she still wanted me to meet my father. He took me to some of his Christian meetings, but I didn't like them. I didn't understand why people were praying, or what they were talking about. I liked their songs, but there was nobody else my age at the meetings, so I didn't have anyone to talk to.

"Since that summer, my parents have shared custody of me. I confess that living with my father was often difficult. He kept bringing me to Christian meetings, and even though some people my age started coming too, I still wasn't really enjoying them. I claimed to be a believer, but I didn't even know what that meant. My father often told me that I wasn't a real believer, because I didn't know God, and that made me angry. I thought that because I knew a lot of information about God, it meant that I was a believer.

"My father, of course, was right. And one day, I realized that I was a sinner, and it completely took me off guard. I was hit by the terrible realization that I didn't want my father to know that he had a terrible son. God kept knocking on my heart, and one day, I finally decided to repent of my sins! Not long after, I attended a summer Bible camp where we had a wonderful time of games, music, dancing, and learning about the Bible. Two of my friends, Alisher and Ruslana, were baptized with me in the Jordan River on the last day of camp. This was the best day of my life!

"I decided that in three months, I want to serve in the army and share my faith with my fellow soldiers. After my friends and I were baptized, five other young men also accepted the Messiah! Praise God!"

- Roman, summer Bible camp participant



Community Youth Clubs



In partnership with Living Israel, Mission Eurasia started its first youth club in 2015 with 10 children between the ages of 6 and 14 from disadvantaged backgrounds. This successful ministry model grew significantly and, in 2016, 24 young people, both Christians and their non-Christian peers, started meeting three times per week in youth clubs at five locations across Israel, including Haifa. The purpose of these youth clubs is to prevent immoral, unhealthy life choices by introducing unsaved youth to new life in the Messiah as well as by deepening the relationship between Christian youth and their Messiah through Bible study, worship, and prayer. Because this first youth club model was so successful, plans are underway to hold seven youth clubs in five different cities in the coming year.

Story of Dan

"We have had many children in our congregation, and I have watched many of them grow into teenagers.

I honestly don't quite know what to do with them when they reach this age, because they can be difficult. One young man, Dan, was particularly challenging for me. He often acted completely bored and uninterested when I tried to talk with him about God, and I would get very frustrated with him. But one day, I felt God calling me to pray for Dan and the rest of the teens in our city, so I just started praying.

"A few months later, when Dan turned 13, our congregation celebrated his Bar Mitzvah together. Even though this special event is supposed to symbolize spiritual growth and maturity, I didn't notice any change in Dan. He still acted bored and uninterested, and I found myself growing more and more annoyed with him.

"This summer, I helped lead the first summer Bible camp for young people in our city, and I prayed that it would help Dan and many other young people come to faith in Yeshua. I was very happy that several young people did accept Yeshua as their Savior, and some of them were even baptized, but I was saddened that I didn't see any change in Dan or his friends.

"A week after camp ended, Dan and several other young people attended a one-day youth conference in Haifa. While I didn't attend the conference, I did pick up Dan and his friends after it was over. When Dan got in the car, I hardly recognized him! He prayed out loud for his family, friends, and community the entire way back to Karmiel! We also drove past an accident on the highway and he said, 'Let's pray for them so that they will not experience eternal death.'

A while later, he also said, 'Let's pray for our country, because so many people don't know Yeshua.' I couldn't believe the change I saw in him, so I asked him what had happened. 'Today at the conference, I realized that Yeshua died for my sins,' Dan said with tears in his eyes. 'Something happened to me. I've been changed.'

"One week later, Dan and some of his friends were baptized! It was a joyful day for our entire congregation. I want to thank our partners at Mission Eurasia for their work with young people, who will one day be leading the church in Israel. They also help us organize summer Bible camps for children and young people so they can learn about Yeshua, and they are leading home Bible study groups, where young people learn to serve in God's Kingdom.

"I have also personally learned a lot over the past few months. This summer, God showed me how to love young people, pray for them, and trust Him to be at work in their hearts. Today, more than 20 young people are participating in our congregation in Karmiel, and I praise God for all that He is doing!"

- Pastor Eli Dorfman



Ministry to the Addicted

Mission Eurasia, in partnership with Living Israel, remains committed to caring for those who are addicted to drugs and alcohol, and who struggle with other chemical dependencies. Most of those suffering from addiction are Russian-speaking youth from the former Soviet Union who have had difficulty adapting to their new homeland. We are grateful to God and to you that, through these efforts, hundreds of men and women have been delivered from their addictions and have found new life in Yeshua as their Messiah. In 2016, a total of 384 people received counseling, care, and other forms of assistance through the Christian rehab center in Haifa.

According to Pastor Veniamin Sadovskiy, one of the founders of Living Israel, "Even those addicts who later leave the church for different reasons continue to serve as evangelistic tools for the Christian rehab ministry. They often tell their friends, who are also addicts, that there is a Christian place where they will receive good care and learn about God, who can deliver them from this addiction."

Sadly, during the past few years, "fast" drugs that create dependency very quickly have been introduced into Israel. These dangerous drugs can lead to death in as little as two years. Because those dependent on "fast" drugs require a longer time to treat, School Without Walls students, in partnership with Living Israel, have committed to provide long-term care at the Christian rehab center in Haifa until these people complete their recovery.



Story of Andrey



"I had dedicated myself to Satan and was involved in the practice of the occult from an early age. When I was only 14, I began to use drugs and then graduated to heavier drugs. I soon realized that I couldn't help myself, even though I knew deep down inside that I should stop. My addiction to drugs was just part of a destructive lifestyle that involved immoral behavior, clubs, parties, women, and everything that the world could offer.

"I ended up in a lot of rehabilitation centers over the years, and it seemed like there was no hope. But when I entered the Christian rehab center in Haifa, I somehow believed that things would be different. And they were! The Christian rehab center in Haifa actually served as a springboard to a new life that is now full of joy! It was here that God changed me from the inside out, and I saw myself through the eyes of my Heavenly Father for the first time.

"Miraculously, I did not experience withdrawal after using drugs for such a long time, but because I had been dedicated to Satan, he continued to dominate my thoughts and mind. This made the next three months in rehab very difficult. I realized that a process of change was going on, but it was extremely difficult and required great effort.

"Last August 27, I celebrated the one-year anniversary of deliverance from my addiction. I graduated from this difficult school, and now I serve Him. Now I realize that God can even use our mistakes for our good. It was difficult and it took time, but God has given me new life in Him! My parents and siblings now attend church together, and we are all rejoicing in our Messiah!"

Safe Haven Café



During the past year, School Without Walls students and graduates in Israel established a new ministry initiative called the Safe Haven Café as a way to put their ministry training into practice and follow in the footsteps of Jesus by reaching out to the marginalized and outcasts of Israeli society.

The Safe Haven Café was started after these young leaders discovered a large area in the capital city of Tel Aviv that was populated by many poor, homeless, Russian-speaking Jewish young people who were suffering from drug addiction, involvement in crime, and other social ills. Our young leaders realized that if they didn't go help these young people who had been rejected by society, no one else would be willing to help them. That's why our young leaders opened the Safe Haven Café where they offer food, prayer, a word of encouragement, and a copy of Scripture to an average of 50-60 people per day. As a result, many have accepted Yeshua as their Messiah, have been baptized, and have returned to a normal way of life.

Scripture Distribution



It is challenging to distribute Christian literature in Israel.

First of all, it is illegal to distribute religious literature to minors without their parents' consent. Secondly, the distribution of religious literature is prohibited during charitable events and activities. Despite these challenges, Mission Eurasia has continued to publish and distribute various Scripture pieces in 2016 in partnership with Living Israel. Thanks to your partnership, thousands of copies of the specially designed *Discover Messiah* New Testament and *Hope* magazine were distributed to Holocaust survivors and their families and new immigrants from the former Soviet Union during the past year.



“When we meet Holocaust survivors, they know that we are caring people who want to help them whenever needed so they are open when we read Scripture to them. Many of them have become believers by reading Scripture. Because they are elderly, they cannot come to church, so we go to them and gather as the Body of Christ where they live.”

– Marina, coordinator for ministry to Holocaust survivors

Overall Gospel Impact



We are so grateful for your partnership this past year, which has enabled Mission Eurasia and Living Israel to share the message of the gospel with the people of Israel in a number of effective ways.

First of all, our School Without Walls students and graduates were able to place thousands of copies of Scripture, including the *Discover Messiah* New Testament and *Hope* magazine, into the hands of unreached men, women, and children, impacting 30,000-32,000 families for Christ. In addition, these young leaders ministered to approximately 1,000 Holocaust survivors, and provided counseling, care, and other forms of assistance to 384 people at the Christian rehab center in Haifa. Through the outreach ministry of Safe Haven Cafe, approximately 20,000 needy Russian-speaking youth received nourishment for their bodies and souls. As a result of the church-planting efforts of Mission Eurasia and Living Israel, 17 new home Bible study groups and six new Christian congregations were established, and more than 100 new Jewish believers were baptized. Finally, more than 150 families with children received special gifts, each containing a copy of Scripture, during the Jewish holidays of Hanukkah and Pesach (Passover). These ministries would not have been possible without your prayers and generous support, for which we are truly grateful.


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Prayer Requests

Mission Eurasia's ministry in Israel, in partnership with Living Israel, continues to face challenges as a result of the complex situation in that country. As faithful supporters of Mission Eurasia, we ask that you would join us in prayer for:

- ▶ Peace in Israel in this turbulent time. Pray that God would provide safety for all ministry leaders, and that He would bless their new home Bible study groups and churches as they conduct ministry.
- ▶ Reconciliation between Arabs and Jews, and for all the people of Israel to experience the love of the Messiah. Please also pray that the relationship between the church and the rest of Israeli society would improve.
- ▶ Greater unity among the body of Christ in Israel, especially among pastors and believers from different denominations, who must work together in greater harmony for the salvation of the lost in Israel.
- ▶ Mission Eurasia as we plan new strategic ministry initiatives for reaching the Russian-Jewish community in Israel.
- ▶ School Without Walls students in Israel who are currently enrolled in biblical studies and engaged in practical ministry training and experience. Please also pray for future students who wish to serve the Russian-Jewish community in Israel.
- ▶ Resources needed to support School Without Walls and other Christian leadership training.
- ▶ Resources needed to print more Scripture and other Christian materials for children and youth in Israel.
- ▶ Resources to continue renting facilities where new congregations can meet throughout Israel.

Thank you for your partnership and generous investment in Mission Eurasia's ministry to the Russian-Jewish community in Israel. Together we are bringing new life in the Messiah to the "lost sheep" of Israel.




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