

The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry Inc.

GLOBAL REPORT

Summer 2021

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Introducing Tetiana Kritenko

An Unexpected Encounter That Is Changing Ukraine Forever

Ukraine—a country where spiritual darkness permeates the culture and the presence of anti-Semitism is palpable—was given hope through the unexpected encounter of two women. A last-minute change in plans brought about the intersection of two incredible people who both love the Lord and share a heart for the Jewish people.

A few years ago, Hanya Cieslar, a veteran FOI representative from Poland, and her Polish team had been visiting Jewish individuals and organizations throughout Ukraine. Hanya made a last-minute decision on the way to the airport to stop by the Jewish Foundation in Ukraine's capital city, Kyiv, before their return flight to Warsaw. She stopped with hopes of meeting the director but was surprised to learn that the office administrator for the director was a born-again Christian named Tetiana (nicknamed Tanya). Tanya was surprised to learn that Hanya would risk missing their return flight home to meet the director.



Immediately a strong friendship was formed. Tanya volunteered to help Hanya in her FOI ministry efforts. She later became a part-time intern with FOI. Today, as of March 1, 2021, Tanya serves as the only full-time ministry representative in Ukraine.

Faithful supporter, I'm writing to ask you to consider both prayer and financial support for this newest addition to the FOI international family. Tanya's work is crucial in expanding outreach to Jewish people in the embattled country of Ukraine. Allow me to share the impact she is having in a country that desperately needs the Lord.



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TANYA'S OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S CALL

Tanya trusted in Jesus the Messiah as her Savior when she was 22 years old. From that moment on, the Bible supplanted all other books and took the most important place in her life. She and her husband Yurii attended a good Bible-believing church which taught about God's Chosen People, Israel. Genesis 12:3, "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed," became an important influence in their lives as they shared their faith with others.

Her life was full of unexpected encounters that ultimately led her to The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. The first person to tell her about God's love through Jesus was a Jewish believer! Tanya's best friend's father was Jewish. Her teacher at music college who trained her to play the piano and influenced her as a young woman was Jewish. Today, most of her family's friends and colleagues are Jewish.

God places Jewish people in the lives of those He is going to use in Jewish ministry. Tanya's network of Jewish friends is what led her to the position as office administrator at the Jewish Foundation. And it is Tanya's obedience to the Lord and her desire to bless His Chosen People that ultimately led her to FOI today.

SPIRITUAL CLIMATE OF UKRAINE

Tanya lives in Kyiv, the capital city of Ukraine, which is home to around 3 million souls. The population of the entire nation is close to 44 million people. Some resources suggest close to half a million Jewish people live in Ukraine, with more than 100,000 of them in Kyiv. In Ukraine the dominant religious groups are the Russian Orthodox church and the Ukrainian Orthodox church, which comprise 80% of the inhabitants. Both these groups teach Replacement Theology, which promotes that the church has replaced Israel and Israel has no national future. Protestants only encompass 2.4 percent of the population,

while Jewish people may make up less than 1 percent of the population.

The culture is filled with anti-Semitism, the spiritual darkness is pervasive. Tanya's loving ministry is a gift of hope to the people of Ukraine.

CURRENT MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

In Tanya's new role as a full-time FOI representative, she actively pursues every ministry opportunity where she can be a blessing. Her connections with Jewish people, which were already substantial, continue to grow. She has regular contact with Jewish leaders of all kinds: the director of a Jewish nursing home, the Israeli Deputy Honorary Consul in western Ukraine, leaders and heads of Jewish communities in several big cities of Ukraine, and a network of about 40 Jewish people in Kyiv.

Because most of the Jewish people in Ukraine live in poverty and have little access to health insurance and services, Tanya was incredibly grateful when generous donors provided the means to purchase a vehicle for her. She regularly uses it to drive Jewish people to the doctor, to deliver food and medicine, and to travel the country to visit Jewish people. Financial support is also used for supplies at Jewish soup kitchens in various cities.

Most importantly, wherever Tanya goes, she shares Bibles and the gospel as opportunities arise. She teaches multiple Bible studies to Jewish women, to her volunteers for Jewish ministry, and to women in her church. She also translates Zoom Bible studies from Polish into Russian when Tanya teaches online. In addition, Tanya uses her musical training and natural gifting for the Lord. Recently, she sang online for a Passover presentation in a Baptist church in Poland. We are grateful for the unique ways God has gifted Tanya for the ministry to which He's called her.





THE STORY OF VALENTINA

Tanya’s Christian influence on others continues to make a tremendous impact for the gospel and in the lives of Jewish people. One of the most powerful stories that illustrates this is that of Valentina. As a youngster, Valentina lived not far from the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant when the nuclear accident occurred in 1986. Her family was resettled in Kyiv where she eventually married in 2000. Her first child was born disabled as a result of the long-term effects of the Chernobyl accident. The doctors said he would not live past eight or nine years old. Then Valentina’s husband left her. In 2002, she attended a Christian church for the first time. It was there that she heard Tanya give her testimony about Christ, and Valentina opened her heart to God. She struggled with her faith as her little boy endured eight heart surgeries. But Tanya befriended her and helped Valentina as her ongoing faith grew. “I remember the day she smiled for the first time in years,” recalled Tanya. Now, by God’s grace, her young boy is 20 years old and attending the National Aviation University.

However, the story doesn’t stop there. In 2017, Tanya and Valentina went to Israel with Hanya Cieslar’s Polish group. Today, Valentina serves as a volunteer helping Tanya and others minister to the Jewish people in Ukraine. Praise God!

THE STORY OF LYUDMILA

In November 2019, Tanya and Hanya visited eastern Ukraine, not far from where the war with Russia has devastated the country. There they met a Jewish woman named Lyudmila and told her about the possibility of her making *aliyah* and living in Israel. *Aliyah* is from the Hebrew word meaning “ascent” and refers



to the return of Jewish people to the nation of Israel from other parts of the world. They kept in touch with Lyudmila and began to help her prepare the necessary documents for a repatriate visa. On March 1, 2021, she arrived at Tanya’s home in Kyiv before she went to the Israeli Embassy for an interview with the Consul. When asked why she wanted to move to Israel, she shared about a dream placed in her heart by her grandmother to go and live in the place where Jews have their own land. She successfully received the appropriate visa and is now scheduled to move to Israel in August 2021. Tanya played a key role in this wonderful change for Lyudmila. In doing so, she blessed the children of Abraham (Gen. 12:3).



TANYA'S PASSION, GOD'S PLAN AND UKRAINE'S HOPE

The extent to which Tanya can reach Jewish people in Ukraine knows no bounds. She looks at her calling to Jewish ministry as similar to Paul's Macedonian call in Acts 16:9–10, identifying with his desire to “come over” and “help” the Jewish people. For some Jewish people, Tanya is their only source of comfort and support.

I first met Tanya in the summer of 2019 in Poland when I was observing one of the FOI Eastern European Summer Camps in Wisla. Tanya was there helping our Polish team including Timothy Rabinek, Hanya, and others run a camp for Jewish children from Ukraine. I watched her interact with the children and heard her great voice as she sang. After interviewing her, I could tell that there was no need to convince her of the truth of Genesis 12:3. She already loved Jewish people deeply and sought to bless them in many ways—not the least of which was sharing the death and resurrection of Messiah Jesus.

The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry's tagline is *Building Bridges. Bringing Hope.* Tanya has shared that the desire to build bridges and bring hope to the Jewish people has become her life's rule.

HOW YOU CAN HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN EASTERN EUROPE

Today, Tanya needs your help. As a new ministry representative who is deeply committed to serving the Jewish people of Ukraine, she still needs to raise a significant amount of her personal support. Your financial support today would go directly toward encouraging the life-changing work that she is immersed in daily in Ukraine.

Would you please consider how you can support Tanya and make an eternal difference in Eastern Europe today?

Mike Stallard



Mike Stallard
Director of International Ministries

If God has spoken to you about providing much-needed support for the ministry in Ukraine, please send your gift to The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc, PO Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099, or visit foi.org/global-report to donate online.