

YOSI DOLINSKY FROM THE NAZARETH VILLAGE HELPS UKRAINIAN REFUGEES



Yosi Dolinsky (left) with other volunteers.

The way I got to be a part of this project was nothing short of God's providence.

I had less than 24 hours to renew my expired passport, get permission from both of my employers, pack my suitcase and be at the airport on time to meet with the team.

I didn't think this was possible, but once my wife encouraged me to go, we sat down and prayed for God's guidance, His mercy and for doors to be open. And sure enough, my passport was renewed within 30 minutes at the Ministry of Interior without an appointment. All doors were open; before you know it, I was on the plane with the team heading to Ukraine.

I first met the team at the airport. It was a novel experience getting to know each other in such unusual circumstances as we were getting ready to fly to Hungary. The shared goal of helping Ukrainian refugees really helped our team bond faster and on a deeper level.

After arriving in Budapest, Hungary, we were met by the team from OMS Hungary and hosted by a family in their home. The whole team sleeping in the living room added to the "togetherness" effect.

Our group met with the OMS Hungary and OMS Ukraine teams. Team Israel was responsible for purchasing

non-perishable goods we would take to the Ukrainian border.

On our way to the border, we had to trust God to find the right people to help us take care of the needs that weren't being met. Our regional director put us in touch with an organisation called Malta, working at the Beregsurány border.

Shortly after starting my volunteering experience, I felt like we could be helping much more.

God really tested our patience, our trust in Him and our willingness to meet the needs where others didn't.

It took some time to pray and work on it as a team, but we saw how God worked through us as we trusted Him all the more.

During our trip, I was able to help translate and register refugees arriving at the Beregsurány help centre. I also packed humanitarian aid for the people in Ukraine and listened to people's sad stories. I took refugees to doctor visits, helped them with an orientation at the help centre, brought them hot food and drinks and even provided food for their pets.

But being there and helping with their physical needs also allowed me to pray for the people and bless them in Jesus' name. I was able to encourage some with verses from the Bible that were dear to my heart, like Romans 8:28. And some refugees going through difficult times even burst out into tears while we had a moment of prayer. I met hundreds of people and was even privileged to

help a family of a dear friend from church cross the border and come to Israel as refugees. But of all the stories, I want to highlight this one.

I'll never forget a man called Vladimir who fled for his life in a wheelchair from Kharkov. His story brings me to tears every time I tell it. I met Vladimir while helping translate for refugees coming from the border. Vladimir crossed the border by ambulance.



A van loaded with food for refugees,

He was in his sixties and was missing both of his legs. Slightly over a year ago, Vladimir had a stroke, and half of his body was paralysed. His wife took care of him and attended to all his needs. Just as his health started to improve, his wife had a heart attack and died before his very own eyes.





Long-term waiting area in a school gym.

Because he was missing both his feet, he couldn't get to her fast enough. She died, and he was swamped by guilt for not having been able to save her.

He was left all alone without any family.

Before the war, Vladimir had searched for a hospital that could give him prosthetic legs and teach him to walk. He found a specialist in the Kharkov hospital that agreed to help him. Moving to Kharkov, Vladimir was hopeful that after the prosthetic leg surgery, he'd be able to work again and go back to living his life in dignity.

But as the war broke out, this hospital in Kharkov was bombed and destroyed. With it, all of Vladimir's hope was gone. As I sat with him in a waiting tent, he was lost, displaced

from home, without family or contacts and hopeless. He said his only hope was to contact the Red Cross for help.

As I prayed for him, he couldn't stop crying bitterly, and I felt his tears drop on my hands. I prayed that God would intervene and have mercy on him and guide him to the right place and towards people that could help him. I felt helpless as well since there was nothing I could offer him, and there was nobody I knew that could help him. But I trusted God.

The next day our prayer was answered!

The Maltese organisation from the help centre had found a place for Vladimir in Germany that would help him with the prosthetic leg surgery.

God is great!





Serving food and warm clothes.

Another unexpected thing that happened to me on the trip was helping a church friend bring her mother and niece to Israel.

Before leaving for Hungary, I asked my church at home in Nazareth to pray for me and the team's work at the border. After several days of volunteering at the border, I got a call from my friends from church. They explained the situation: their mother, who lives in Vinnytsia, Ukraine, didn't want to leave Ukraine. But as the days went by, they realised that things would only get worse, and there was no reason to stay. However, since her mother didn't know English or any other language, she was afraid to go. But knowing that she'd have me as her contact on the ground at the border, she finally agreed to go.

After sharing our whereabouts with her son, we were all waiting. It took them almost a full day to get to the border and another 3 hours just waiting to get their paperwork done.

It really made this trip more personal for me, knowing that I'm responsible for meeting this family and helping them get to Israel safely. When we finally met, I could see they were under lots of pressure and were so happy to see me. I finished registering them, and we got some hot coffee and sandwiches.



Malta registration stands for refugees to arrange transportation



I got to pray for them, and I could see that they weren't as nervous anymore.

We could finally drive them to Budapest, where they would stay until their flight to Israel.

But the adventure wasn't over since their documents expired and the Ukrainian government wouldn't renew their passports. We didn't know what to do. So it took us a while to figure out which documents were needed and how we could arrange their flight without any problems.

But just before they were ready to fly, the niece contracted Covid. So they had to wait a bit longer until they could finally be reunited with their family in Israel.

On this trip, I learned how important it is to work as a team, forget our differences and be united in our mission. I learned to be patient and flexible while being attentive to the needs of those around me.

God worked with my heart and exposed my prejudice towards refugees and began to change my heart and mould it into His heart for those seeking help. So I can say that I don't see refugees as a problem anymore but as an opportunity to pour out the love of God that He shared with me.

And most importantly, now I know that God doesn't need me to do any of those things I did, but the refugees needed me, and He gave me the opportunity, and I am overwhelmed with thanksgiving and His grace towards me.

I see and know that God is at work in my heart, He's at work in Ukraine, and He's at work to accomplish His plan that was set in motion before the world began.

I am thankful I got to be a small part of that plan, working in partnership with ILM and OMA/OMS in Hungary. It is something that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.



Yosi Dolinsky

Responsible for media, marketing and guide at the Nazareth Village

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