



And He will lift up a standard for the nations,  
and will assemble the banished ones of Israel,  
and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the  
four corners of the earth. Isaiah 11:12

RESCUE | RETURN | RESTORE



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## Aliyah Is What's Up

By Rev. Gary Cristofaro

According to data compiled by The Jewish Agency for Israel and the Israel Ministry of Immigration and Absorption, some 19,200 immigrants arrived in Israel in 2013. Minister of Immigration and Absorption Sofa Landver said: "The 2013 data proves that more and more Jews around the world realize that Israel is their home. Chairman of the Executive of The Jewish Agency Natan Sharansky recently said: "Israel is the beating heart of the Jewish people. That 19,200 Jews have chosen to establish their lives in Israel is a concrete expression of Israel's centrality to Jewish life and to Jews around the world".



While referring to the increase in Aliyah from many parts of the world Chairman Sharansky also said, "This is an era of Aliyah by choice, rather than Aliyah of rescue, and so it is important that we continue The Jewish Agency's efforts to strengthen the young generation's Jewish identity and deepen their connections to Israel." Thankfully, for many of the Jewish people coming from places like North America and Western Europe Chairman Sharansky is right. But there is no denying that rising anti-Semitism in Europe has played a large role in the decision making process of many of these new immigrants. The situation only gets worse when we move our focus to Eastern Europe and to the former Soviet Union.

For close to two decades Ezra International has been working in harmony with The Jewish Agency in countries of the Diaspora where Aliyah is not quite as easy. Poverty has become the new "Red Sea" standing in the way for many of the residents of these nations. The people that Ezra helps probably accounts for between 5 and 10 percent of the total aliyah numbers each year. Therefore for the olim (immigrants to Israel) that Ezra International works with, this "is" an Aliyah of rescue.

Ezra International has a dedicated staff and a small army of volunteers that come along side the Jewish Agency in nation after nation where conditions are much more challenging for the Jewish populations. As He did so often in the scriptures, God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. The Hebrew word *kavanah* means, in part, to have an intimate understanding of the heart of God and acting accordingly. I fully trust that Ezra International's mission is at the very heart of the living God!

It may come as a surprise to some but it doesn't really require an enormous amount of effort to discover the will and heart of God for our generation. The scriptures are replete with hundreds of references to the final re-gathering of the Jewish people back to the land of Israel. Amazingly, many of these passages reveal God's desires to accomplish this work through the people of the nations. Hear the heart of God as He speaks through His prophets concerning the final re-gathering.

*For thus says the Lord:” Sing with gladness for Jacob, And shout among the chief of the nations; Proclaim, give praise, and say, do Lord, save Your people, The remnant of Israel!”*

**8** *Behold, I will bring them from the north country, And gather them from the ends of the earth, Among them the blind and the lame, The woman with child And the one who labors with child, together; A great throng shall return there.*

**9** *They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn.*

**10** *“Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, And declare it in the isles afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, And keep him as a shepherd does his flock.’ (Jeremiah 31: 7-10)*

*Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, and set up My standard for the peoples; they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders; (Isaiah 49:22)*

Do you hear the heart of God? Aliyah is what’s up! He is calling to us in the nations to respond to the needs of the least of these His children. Many more Jewish people will heed God’s call to return to Israel. God is also calling to you; will you heed His call to help more of them make it home?