

In War's 3rd Year, God's Hand Among Ukraine Ruins

Just a week ago, I stood in the ruins of what was once a high-end, beautiful hotel in Odesa, Ukraine. I couldn't help but think that just one week before that, I had been sitting in my comfortable home, watching a television news report about a rocket striking a hotel in Odesa.

Now I was there, in what remained of that same hotel. I marveled at how a rocket had reduced this opulent, grand old place to ruins. It struck me then so powerfully that it doesn't matter if it's the humble home of a single mother with small children, the broken-down shack of an elderly woman struggling to survive the frigid winter or a high-end hotel—war does not discriminate. It comes for everyone and for everything.

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It was my fourth trip to this country. I came as chairman of the board of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (The Fellowship), which has been on the ground in Ukraine for years—decades in fact—delivering aid to the poor and downtrodden, the neediest of the needy, the most isolated of Jewish people anywhere in the world.

Today, Ukraine is marking a grim anniversary. Three years ago, on Feb. 24, 2022, the war began. And it drags on today. Yael Eckstein, our president and CEO, was there one week before it started—she saw all too clearly what was coming and wanted to be sure The Fellowship was prepared to serve its people.

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The objective of the latest mission was both to inspect and measure the devastation and decimation of the land and its buildings, as well as to bring comfort and hope to those vulnerable Jews whose lives have been forever changed by this conflict. It seemed as though every elderly Jewish woman I spoke with during this trip had the same story: She lost her father in World War II and lost her grandson in this Russian-Ukrainian War.

But amid all the suffering was something remarkable: In this country ravaged by three years of war, I saw the hand of God in the ruins.

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