

*„I will go before you and will level the mountains, I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places!“*

## MICHAEL SHNITKOVSKY

*Isaiah*

*45:2-3*



Michael

It takes a while to get to know Michael, a rather quiet man who mostly stays in the background. Once seeing his heart, everyone will agree that Michael is a real treasure. We are blessed to call him: „A member of our small Ner Yaakov family!“

He comes quite often to visit our Ner Yaakov-Center, where he had also lived for some time.

Totally the opposite from what he was about 9 years ago, when we first met him, he is opening up more and more and calls everything connected to Ner Yaakov, “we,” “us” and “our” - which of course makes us all very happy!

We were always aware, that his whole childhood was destroyed by being imprisoned for years in a Ghetto, only to find out, that there was an additional pain that formed his life—losing his mother and being a half-orphan. He was born in 1932 in the Ukraine, in the area of Vinica. Then only nine years old, the horror started for him, his father, stepmother and siblings. “The Nazis came in our home and took the whole street to make a Ghetto. We tried to run away from the village,” he shared. “A Ukrainian man told us to hide. At first we actually thought he wanted to help us, but instead he stole everything from us. After the war, there was nothing left of our home—only stones. For three years we endured such terrible cold and there was no food. I remember like it was today, how 150 people were killed in only one day. Once a group of prisoners, 70 people, had to go to Odessa, - only 5 or 6 of them came back... in my heart I was not afraid anymore! ...Then one day, the Russian army came to liberate us!”

Right after the horrors of the Holocaust, he had to endure another terrible hardship. His father was taken to the Russian Army and his stepmother did not want to raise him and his siblings, only her own children, the younger twins. They were brought to their very, very poor grandmother. “We literally had only rags,” he told us. “But my grandmother was very good and everything she had, she gave to us!”

Michael married and had two sons, who later immigrated to Israel. He nursed his sick wife for many years and after she passed away he joined his sons in Israel, in the year 2000.

The younger son is a terror attack survivor. He stood next to a suicide bomber, and was wounded, but thanks be to God he is alive.

Michael is a wonderful person and a blessing for us. We always want him to feel “at home” at Ner Yaakov. We welcome him and love him, - which is so easy to do!

One day at a gathering at Ner Yaakov we hosted our friends from Hadera. Michael sat next to a lady who also came from the area of Vinica. As they spoke, they discovered that they already knew each other from their youth. Actually, Michael wanted to marry this lady’s sister once upon a time! “What a small world!” Or better to say: “God’s ways and His world!”

## SACHAR + RAJA ROTKIN—10 YEARS AT NER YAAKOV:

“Lord, please prolong the days of his life!” was our prayer for Sachar, when he and his wife Raja came to Ner Yaakov in the summer 2001. Now it is 10 years later! We do now want to honor the Lord for his many miracles he has done in both of their lives. Some of their doctors say, that it is a miracle that they are still alive! However, we do want to ask you for your prayers for wisdom and for clear guidance. Raja with her cancer-illness and many other medical problems has become a total nursing-case. Sachar is somehow a little better and always tries to help, but he will soon be 89-years-old, and is in the same condition. Our volunteers are always so willing to serve, day and night, - but we are not really a ‘nursing-home’. Please pray, that we can keep them as long as it is the Lord’s will and to be able to provide the best care possible!

**Photo:** Sachar with Christian Träger. Christian and his wife Nora celebrated Shabbat with us, together with a group of survivors from Germany who stayed at Ner Yaakov for some days in the spring!

... and in everything: “We thank the Lord our God!”



Sachar and Christian