

# Photo Exhibition in New-York

Israeli photo exhibition opens a window into the lives of Georgian Jews





**Atalia Katz**

Katz is a leading professional speaker, author, and coach. In 2015 she was named one of the most influential women in Israel. She is a frequent guest on Israeli television and a sought-after speaker at corporate events. Her book, "The Power of the Woman Who Says No," is a bestseller in Israel.

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**Naphali (Nati) Ben-David**

Ben-David is a leading professional speaker, author, and coach. In 2015 he was named one of the most influential men in Israel. He is a frequent guest on Israeli television and a sought-after speaker at corporate events. His book, "The Power of the Man Who Says No," is a bestseller in Israel.

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**Locked Gate.** Trying to open the desolate synagogue where they no longer pray. Atalia Katz (104)



It was the JDC that entered the scene, creating Hesed. Today, 165,000 people throughout the Former Soviet Union receive assistance through Hesed.

In this exhibition a group of amateur photographers touched and endeavored to tell the story of these people, and the story of the Jewish People's moments of grace, and concern for its most remote communities. These photographers asked themselves "What is Hesed?" "How can you capture

Hesed in one simple shot?" They found out that, at the end of the day, Hesed is found in very simple things: Hot meals. Blood pressure medicine. Home visits. Community.

They found out that Hesed means not only Grace. It means Hope.

The full story about the trip can be found at [www.jdocu.com](http://www.jdocu.com)



4 In a Search of Human Grace



**The Lady.** Atalia Katz (106)





# THE JERUSALEM POST

Israel's best-selling English daily and most-read English website



Photo by: Eliezer Yaari

## TA exhibit highlights last rural Georgian Jews

By GIL SHEFLER  
28/03/2012

Story of Kakiashvilis common among Georgian Jewish Diaspora: Proud of their past, but the future lies elsewhere.

A group of people gathered around an enlarged photograph at the launch of a new photo exhibit at Beit Hatfutsot – The Museum of the Jewish People on Tuesday.

The portrait showed an elderly man wearing a blue shirt and a dark cap standing guard over the old Jewish cemetery in the small Georgian town of Oni.

Wild growth obscured most of the tombstones on the ground and the snow-capped Caucasus mountains were seen glistening in the distance.

"His name is Mikhail Kakiashvili and he will be the last Jew in Oni," said writer Eliezer Yaari, who snapped the photo when he visited Georgia last summer. Yaari was part of a group of Israeli photography enthusiasts called JDocu which traveled to the Caucasian country to document the local Jewish community in cooperation with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

They toured the land taking photos of the people and places they came across and upon return organized an exhibit at the museum in north Tel Aviv on Georgian Jewish life.

One of their more memorable stops was Oni, where they met Kakiashvili and a dozen or so local Jews, most of whom are old and ailing.

"Kakiashvili holds the keys to the synagogue and drives once a month to Tbilisi to bring back kosher meat," Yaari said. "He rarely comes to Israel. I don't know why. We learned on our trip not to ask too many questions. But when he passes away that will be the end of the community."

Five minutes later the image of the last guardian of the Jewish community in Oni sprang to life when none other than Kakiashvili himself arrived to the surprise of most of the people in the room. He had the same expression on his face and wore a similar cap to the one he had on in the picture, but the blue shirt was gone, replaced by a dark grey blazer on account of the occasion.

An astonished Yaari gave the man a warm bear hug and Georgian Ambassador to Israel Vakhtang Jaoshvili shook his hand.

"He is here visiting us," Kakiashvili's son, who lives in Israel, said in rudimentary Hebrew on behalf of his father. "He might make aliya one day but we have the synagogue in Oni to take care of. It is very beautiful and we have many things, many sacred books there."

The story of the Kakiashvilis is common among the Georgian Jewish Diaspora. They're proud of their past in Georgia, but their future lies elsewhere.

From a peak of maybe 100,000 people, there are currently about 6,000 Jews in the country.

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## Israeli photo exhibition opens a window into the lives of Georgian Jews

Seven Israelis document Jewish communities in impoverished areas of Georgia, with a view to generating philanthropy.

By Aimee Neistat | Mar. 22, 2012 | 6:29 AM

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Once a week, Michael Kakiashvili sets out on an eight-hour drive to the Georgian capital of Tbilisi to purchase kosher meat for the six remaining Jewish families in the western town of Oni. When his entire family made aliyah to Israel, Kakiashvili stayed behind to guard the town's Jewish cemetery, and ensure the local synagogue was kept alive.

A large photo of Kakiashvili standing in what could be mistaken for an overgrown garden – but is in-fact the Jewish cemetery of Oni – on a backdrop of snow-capped mountains and a glossy blue sky, is hung on the white walls of a modest, but captivating exhibition at Beit Hatfutsot – The Museum of the Jewish People, in Tel Aviv.

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