

## Crossing a Bridge to Freedom

Natan Sharansky was a human rights activist working to protect the rights of oppressed citizens in the Soviet Union. For his human rights work, Soviet officials sentenced him to 13 years in a prison labor camp.

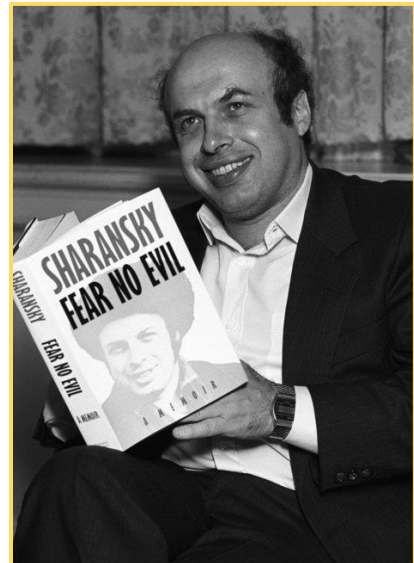
For nine long years, Sharansky lived in a barren prison cell and performed hard labor daily. The story of his unjust imprisonment caught the attention of politicians and supporters around the world, and they finally pressured the Soviet government into releasing Sharansky in a prisoner exchange.

The exchange took place on Feb. 1, 1986, in East Germany, which was under the control of the Communists at that time. The Soviet officials and Natan Sharansky stood on the east side of the Glienecke Bridge in Berlin. Politicians, human rights activists and journalists crowded the west side of the bridge.

A guard released Sharansky, and he began to cross the bridge to freedom. But he did a strange thing. Instead of just walking across the bridge, Sharansky zig-zagged, skipped and danced from the east side of the bridge into the cheering crowd of supporters on the west side of the bridge.

When a reporter asked him later why he had chosen such a strange way to cross the bridge, Sharansky replied that the KGB had told him to cross the bridge in a straight line, and his last act of defiance against his oppressors was to dance his way across the bridge into freedom.

Prayer is the bridge between this sinful world and the kingdom of God. Jesus said, in Matthew 6, that God knows what we need before we ask Him. So, what is the purpose of prayer?



Prayer puts us in the presence of God. Prayer may or may not change our circumstances, but it changes us. Prayer helps us to see this world, to think about this world, to respond to this world the way that God would. Prayer gives us the strength and wisdom of the Holy Spirit, which gives us an eternal perspective on our current circumstances.

And persistent prayer reminds us that God is working in this world whether we see the results or not.

*When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly (Matthew 6:6 NKJV).*