

News from the Haifa Home

Sons of the Covenant

Like most Jewish boys approaching 13 years, Yosef began studying for his Bar Mitzvah. But then war broke out. Instead of a joyous celebration with family and friends, Yosef spent his teenage years at various Labour and Concentration Camps. His family all perished.



Now, at age 88, Yosef celebrated his Bar Mitzvah after all! The Chief Rabbi of Haifa conducted the ceremony. The downstairs area of the Haifa Home, where the commemoration of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day was taking place, was filled to capacity. Three other men shared this moving celebration, each reading from the Torah and receiving a prayer shawl and *tefillin*. Nahum was one of those men. He was very emotional as painful memories poured over him like a flood and was unable to talk to the newspaper journalists who had come to cover this poignant event.

To see some moving footage of the event, go to this site: <http://www.hevrati.org.il/?p=426>

Some women who had never been able to have a Bat Mitzvah also celebrated. The ceremony was followed with some singing and a wonderful dinner made with much love by the Home's excellent chef.

During the meal Ester began to share her story. Four year old Ester experienced a terrifying flight into the forest with her family where they hid until discovered by soldiers. She witnessed the murders of her mother and a sister before somehow escaping with another sister. The retelling released a lot of emotion which was very hard for her. But she was determined. *"I want to tell people, because people think that we lie, that it never happened. Every morning I say good morning to my parents and sisters Maya and Klara. It 'kills' me when I hear people like Ahmadinadjad saying that it never happened. Who will still believe us?"* she asked with tears in her eyes.

January 27-International Holocaust Remembrance Day

Other Holocaust Survivors from Haifa were there for the occasion and after the meal listened to songs and speeches that acknowledged International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

ICEJ played a significant role in this special occasion with a moving song by Vesna Bühler an accomplished singer, and an address by husband

Jürgen, ICEJ's International Director. He shared the story of his father who, as a German soldier, had been miraculously saved from death by a Jewish doctor. Jurgen grew up in a family where he was taught to love and honour the Jewish people. The story was so touching that one man began to share his terrible experiences even while hardly able to utter the words. "It is a release for him" his wife said.



While being cared for in a secure and loving environment where joys and tears are shared, where personal stories are told, and where love is conveyed on your behalf by ICEJ staff, these survivors can experience some healing from the anguish that haunts them.

Miracles

While at the Home on the 27th January, ICEJ staff learned that the finance available for the renovation project on the second building would run out by the following Sunday. This would result in the workers being sent home and the work suspended unless another NIS 45,000 (approx \$US12,500) was provided. However a visitor from Finland had been present that day and he was moved to give a gift, one that would cover that amount. We are thankful too that since then, ICEJ Germany has given more funding and work is continuing for now. Shimon said, *"this whole project is miracle upon miracle..."*

Progress



As long as funding continues to come, another dilapidated building will soon be turned into a home for Survivors. More funding is needed, but wonderfully so far, it has always been provided on time. The renovations are progressing well. The old building has been made structurally sound; new windows are being installed; plastering has been completed and painting is underway; the bathrooms have been installed complete with tiling. Not only is the building undergoing refurbishment, but has even had an additional floor added. This top floor will be used as the dining and activity area.

We are happy to report that the elevator has finally been installed in the first building after many delays which will enable more Survivors to move in their rooms.

For more information write to icejaid@icej.org