

Dear Friends,

We would like to take you with us on our latest visit to some Holocaust Survivors in Pardes Hanna, a town of approximately 30,000 people on the Coastal Plain south of Haifa.

### What lies behind the smile?

Our first visit is to Esther. We arrive as a mini-van pulls up and out springs a group of energetic and smiling young men. They have just arrived from Katzrin, approximately an hour's drive away. They are students from the Academy to which *L'Chaim*, our partner organization, is attached. This is the day they visit 'their' Survivors as they faithfully do twice a month. They set out in pairs and we follow in the footsteps of the two who have been assigned to visit Esther. They climb up the many stairs leading to her apartment, each carrying bags of fresh fruits and vegetables. Esther welcomes us all in.



See her delight to have the young men visit. *"They are like my sons..."* she tells us with a smile. Esther, whose whole family was killed during the Holocaust, lost her husband almost 20 years ago and has been very lonely since then. Now the adoption program has brought her cheery company. The interaction with the young volunteers is very therapeutic for her. In spite of her near blindness and a multitude of health problems that is the legacy of years of malnutrition as a child, she is energetic and bubbly. Behind Esther's smile and energy though, lie many years of indescribable pain. During the war as a child, she and her father had to hide in various cemeteries. At night, they literally had to be buried underground to escape danger. Hunger never left them unless it was eased from time to time by a piece of bread.

Esther wants to show us the new air conditioner that was just installed for her thanks to the Adoption Program. Having had 2 heart attacks since 1992, she will now be able to live comfortably through the long hot Israeli summers. Because of her health problems, Esther faces high medical bills but now is able to cover them, no longer having to choose between food and medication. We enjoy a short visit with her but it is time to move on. So, we give her a small gift and leave her to enjoy the boys company.

### Saved by the "Kindertransport"



Next, we go to Ruth's apartment and find her also in the midst of an obviously enjoyable visit with two student volunteers. She has lovingly laid out tea, fruits and a delicious cake that she has baked especially for them. We see the warm relationship she and the young men have and also the way her life story is impacting them. She is telling them how as a child born in Germany, she was separated from her mother who sent her and her older sister to England under a rescue mission – the "Kindertransport"- that gave a limited number of Jewish children shelter in the UK.

There, they stayed in an orphanage but shamefully suffered much abuse. Back in Europe, her mother and younger sister were sent firstly to a transition camp then to Kovno in Lithuania where they were killed in one of the massacres of the Jews. *“My mother was shot in a mass grave”* she relates. She is eager to show us a photo album with pictures of her family. *“This is my uncle who was killed during the war...here I am with my sister at the orphanage...”*

Despite the pain of much rejection throughout her life, Ruth is an amazing testimony of life and generosity at 77 years of age. She and her husband, also a Survivor, moved to Israel in the 1950's where they lived on a kibbutz. After he died she moved to Pardes Hanna-Karkur. There she met a widower with whom she lived 4 years until he died 14 years ago. In his will he had stipulated that the house be hers until her death. However the children of his first marriage, who also happen to live under her house, have fought for possession for her part of the house and want her to leave. In addition to their routine care, *L' Chaim* is helping her in this legal and emotional battle.

### Actions speak louder than words



Let's finish our day in Pardes Hanna-Karkur with a visit to Adela's where the students have been working hard to clear her garden of weeds and thorns. They look very happy in spite of a hard day's work. Adela always enjoys a visit and the boys' work has gladdened her heart. We meet Shachar, the Rabbi who accompanies the students on their visits. *“We want them not only to study the Torah but to put it into practice”* he says with a big smile.



It's been a wonderful day. It is always a privilege to meet the Survivors, hear their stories and see their joy for their newfound support and friendship. We have also seen the unique side of this project today. We have seen the boys "in action" reminding us that this project that brings joy and life to the survivors, teaches youth to reach out to these precious people and learn from them. **Thanks for coming!**

ICEJ AID has received word that a few days after our visit Ruth was diagnosed with breast cancer and requires an immediate mastectomy. Following her operation she will need to undergo two months of radiation, a process that necessitates a twice weekly visit to the nearest hospital which is over 40 km (25 miles) away. She will have to travel by taxi which will cost \$200 a week. This type of urgent need often arises with our elderly adoptees, but is only partly covered by the Adoption Project. Therefore we have established a **Holocaust Survivor General Fund** that enables us to help our adoptees in their hour of urgent need, beyond what we give them already. If you know someone who would like to help Holocaust Survivors but cannot afford an adoption, giving to this General Fund is a wonderful way of being part of this ministry of comfort to the Survivors.

**Please keep supporting the Holocaust Survivor Adoption Project - for further information write to:**

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