

Adopt a Holocaust Survivor

Holocaust Survivors ...and Missile Attacks...

A few weeks ago, ICEJ AID staff traveled to the northern town of Kiryat Shmona to visit Holocaust Survivors. This city, nestled beneath hills that mark the boundary with Lebanon, lived many years under the constant threat of Hezbollah missile attacks until 2006 when the situation culminated into open conflict with the terrorist organization. Hundreds of missiles rained down on Kiryat Shmona and on northern Israel during that summer war. Recently there was a frightening reminder of that war as a katyusha missile was fired into an area close to the town.

The View towards Lebanon from Kiryat Shmona



Moshe

Moshe was a little boy in the Ukrainian Zhabokrych Ghetto in which his family was forced to live during the Nazi occupation. One day, German soldiers fired into a crowd of residents. Moshe's grandfather quickly shielded the boy with his body. Moshe survived but his grandfather was killed as was Moshe's baby sister who was lying in the arms of her mother, Tatiana. To this day, Tatiana carries the scar of the bullet that first pierced her baby's body and then lodged in her arm as well as many painful memories of those dreadful years.

Moshe, his family and his mother came to Israel over 10 years ago. They know that this is their homeland but sometimes it is a lonely one and when ICEJ Aid staff visited in recent weeks, it was an especially lonely time for Moshe. His mother Tatiana, who is adopted by the ICEJ Young Adults department – *Grafted*, was in the hospital for cancer treatment. His wife was treated for a heart condition in another hospital and his son had also been hospitalized in a yet different location. He told us that he spent every second day visiting them. His mother, who has suffered so much, now has a measure of dementia and her son's visits are very important to her.

As we sat with him, eating delicious fresh grapes from his own grapevine, we asked him the question: *"Where were you when the missiles were falling down on Kiryat Shmona?"*

Moshe recounted that the health situation of his elderly and ailing mother Tatiana made it difficult for them to get away from the katyusha missiles. So, this dear family had to wait out the terrifying experience in their apartment, even though the building was empty of other residents who had fled to southern areas.

It was obvious that Moshe appreciated our visit, as he does those of the boys who continue to bring him food and give him much needed company. Moshe had had a respectable position back in Tashkent in the Ukraine, even for some time as a government minister, and enjoyed having many friends. But he left that behind to come to Israel. *"Man cannot live by bread alone,"* he stated, *"we really desire to be part of Israeli society but it's not easy and we need help to connect."*

Nikola and Zina

After climbing the many stairs leading to their apartment in an old and dilapidated building, we were warmly welcomed by Zina, an outgoing and friendly lady. She shared with us stories of ghetto life, of hunger, and of losing many family members. Next to her, Nikola sat quietly. The trauma of the past, health problems and present circumstances have left him very depressed. As we talked, we discovered that during the deadly missile attacks in this northern most town, Nikola and Zina moved to various places seeking a safe refuge. After the cease-fire they returned to Kiryat Shmona. Their low cost government provided apartment has serious



maintenance problems and its shabby appearance is a source of embarrassment to them. However, with his wife, he expressed their great appreciation of the visits of the boys and the support of the Adopt a Holocaust Survivor Program. *"Relationship is so important"*, they said to us, *"we just don't want people to forget we are here."* Like Moshe they had found that connecting to the society around them was not easy and so the boys' visits give them great joy.



Ida

Our last visit was to Ida whose story we recounted in our August update. Her legs are more painful than ever and the 3 stories she must climb to reach her 3rd floor apartment make it almost impossible for her to go out. Daniel, L'Chaim's Coordinator who accompanied us on the visits, quickly decided that from now on she is to have a list of errands ready for 'her' boys when they come to deliver the food. Although the government provides her with a caretaker two hours a week, this is far from enough and this extra help from the boys will be a tremendous blessing to her. Before leaving, we took time to admire the plants she is caring for on her small balcony; two rows of pots with various flowers and foliage

adorn the walls and she beamed with appreciation. She has few friends, she tells us, and is very happy that we came to visit her.

There's More!

Through these visits, we once again witnessed how the Adopt a Holocaust Survivor Program is doing more than just providing financial assistance. Through our partner organisation, L'Chaim, a bridge of friendship is provided to the community around them.

In addition, their inclusion in the Jewish Holidays is an excellent way for them to feel connected to their heritage and to Israel. During Sukkot, thanks to special gifts sent to us for our Holocaust Survivor General Fund, all the Survivors in Katzrin in the Golan Heights were given a wonderful meal in a Sukkah in which the town Rabbi officiated. He spoke to the Survivors with warmth and humour about the many aspects of the Festival. Through this, the Survivors were exposed to the deeper meaning of Sukkot in an atmosphere of festivity and love.



This letter of appreciation came from L'Chaim's Coordinator:

Dear friends,

Now all the festivals are over and thanks to your generous help we were able to celebrate and bring joy and happiness to many, many people whom without your help would not have been able to enjoy the festivals at all...

...I would like to thank you all for making this possible. We all need to keep up the good work to keep this important project growing.

Yours,

Daniel.

Our thanks too for your love and support

For more information, contact us at:

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