

Helping Holocaust Survivors Survive



Photo by Stanislaw Gawel

THEIR NIGHTMARES ARE FILLED WITH PAIN: Nazi boots marching and kicking, attack dogs barking, running in the forest, hunger, disease and loss, gas chambers, cattle cars full of people, starving people. They are Holocaust survivors. After the war they emerged from the Nazi camps—hollow-eyed refugees, their health destroyed and lacking the funds to start over. They were wounded in body and spirit, but they were alive. Many streamed to Israel where they helped build a country with sheer determination. Seventy years after the end of the Holocaust, there are few who remain.

In Israel there are 200,000 survivors (out of an estimated 500,000 worldwide). Their average age is 79, although more than 25% are 85 or older. 160,000 in Israel are Russian-speaking immigrants who moved to Israel during the *aliyah* (immigration) from the Former Soviet Union (FSU). Their situation is often desperate. We assist many with food and encouragement.

For Holocaust survivors remaining in Ukraine and other parts of the FSU, life is even harder. I traveled around the Ukraine with local Christians who are reaching out to help them. I met many survivors, often with tattooed numbers on their arms. Through our Project Tikvah we are helping many.



Gita receives food from us. She says, “My life is a piece of history. I’m 86 years old. At first when the war broke out we continued to live like before. But then they forced us into hard labor building roads. We got some help from

a Ukrainian policeman, who warned my mother that the Nazis were going to abduct us. So, we fled to the forest, where it was very cold.

“When I tell my grandson, he says it can’t be true; no human being can survive all that. But I say: there is nothing tougher than a human, even iron is softer than a human being. The Most High helped me survive. After the war, I went back to school. Most of my family members had died. I got married, and gave birth to two children. One lives in Moldova and one in Israel. I’m Jewish and married three times. My husbands all died, so I’m alone. Praise God, some people visit me here as I can’t get around much. The food packages mean a lot to me.”



Grigorij is 87, and his wife 83. She broke her hip and can’t walk. When asked about their lives they immediately flash back to the Nazi era. “During the war we were in ghettos in the Zhytomyr area. Before the war we each had big families, but we lost them in the Holocaust. All my brothers died. Her brothers too. My father was killed by the Nazis. Once I was cutting and drying the harvest. A Nazi struck me, and I still have the scar on my head.

“After that we hid in different places. The Nazis chased us but couldn’t find us. We had help. I even

wrote a testimony to the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, acknowledging a Righteous Gentile, this Ukrainian who helped Jews, **praise the Lord**. Thousands of Jews from our community died in the war. Today in Ukraine there are some parties that hate Jews.” His wife interjects, “History will probably be repeated.” Grigorij continues, “There were also Ukrainian collaborators with the Nazis in Lvov. Those collaborators came into houses and stole all they could, even the pillows from our beds.”

The Project Hope Coordinator, Stanislaw, encourages them by saying, “You must understand God has plans for your lives. He loves you. You see, at 87 and 83 years old, it’s a miracle you survived and are still alive.” Grigorij brightens, “Yes, I’m amazed when I recall that at 17, I had no shoes when it was cold. I didn’t get sick, and even now I’m still healthy for being 87. Yet, even the survivors who made it are now dying off quickly. We’re the only two remaining of the people we knew.”



Photos by Stanislaw Gawel

Project Tikvah (Hope) exists to reach out to the elderly Holocaust survivors. Through the generous gifts of Christians we are feeding them, providing heat and medicines. The food is delivered (to those who can cook) or prepared (for those who can't) by Christians who meet their practical needs and show them unconditional love.

This is Our Time to Show God's Love

I remember when I first saw pictures from the Holocaust. I cried and told my parents, “If I had been there, I would have saved lives.” Well, I wasn’t there. Others were. **This is our time**. God has chosen us for this time in history. Today, the Nazis are gone, but their victims still suffer. They are cold, hungry and sick. They are alone. God has called us to minister to their needs. Your generous gift will show Holocaust survivors that God has not forgotten them. Our gifts of food, heat and medicine will communicate His love in a dramatic way in their lives. Join me as we bring comfort to their lives.

Blessings from Israel,
Rebecca J. Brimmer, *International President and CEO*

Shocking Conditions

The poverty is shocking. In the villages and rural settings they live in small ramshackle homes, or in bleak, damp concrete Soviet-bloc apartment buildings in the cities. I’ve opened their kitchen cupboards and have seen tea bags and nothing else. I learned that their pensions are miniscule, not even covering the cost of food.

We are now in the depths of winter and it is freezing cold. Without our help many will not have heat. Others are in need of life-saving medicines. Without our help they will suffer. All of them need food. Without our help they will be hungry.

BRIDGES FOR PEACE Your Israel Connection...

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Enclosed is \$ _____ for your **GREATEST MINISTRY NEED**.
 I wish to make an ongoing financial commitment: \$ _____ monthly

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TOTAL \$ _____
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I will pray for Israel and the Jewish people.
 I also need your prayers, which I have attached.
 I have placed Bridges for Peace in my will to bless future generations.
 Please send me information on your Bridges for Peace travel programs.
 Please send your publications to my friend(s), whose name(s) and address(es) is/are attached.