

# The Survivor Mitzvah Project

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I have just returned from *The Survivor Mitzvah Project's* humanitarian mission to Ukraine, where I was honored to be the messenger of your generosity and goodwill. Your donations brought food, medicine, heat and shelter to the elderly Holocaust survivors. And, equally important, they brought friendship, joy and hope.

Here is my eyewitness report, with news and photographs that are both heartening and heartbreaking.

On a mission that encompassed 1,500 miles over 14 days, with visits to over 60 survivors, we observed the dramatic results of our efforts. Many of the survivors we have been helping over the years are doing well. Their health has improved with the financial assistance from *The Survivor Mitzvah Project* allowing them to purchase life-saving medications, food, heating fuel and make badly needed repairs to their crumbling dwellings.

For those newly discovered on our trip, and others who are totally alone, without family or friends, the situation is indeed bleak. Elderly and ill, isolated and forgotten, they live in unimaginable poverty, in small huts that are literally falling apart. Their only help – and hope – comes from *The Survivor Mitzvah Project*.

Yet all the survivors we visited, whatever their circumstances, greeted us with every kindness and insisted we share their meager provisions. They implored us to convey their deep gratitude to all of you, their angels from America ("*di malokhim fun Amerike*"), who provide physical and emotional sustenance, care and concern.



*Anna Israelevna, 93 years old, suffered unspeakable hardship, along with her sisters, mother and seven infants, during the Holocaust, as they crossed three rivers in a miraculous escape from the advancing Nazi Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing squads).*

*Her beautiful blue eyes can now see again because The Survivor Mitzvah Project paid for her eye surgery.*



*(right) Zane Buzby & Anna*



We celebrated New Year's Eve with this couple (left): Tsal, a survivor of the Battle of Stalingrad, and Dora, his beloved wife and sweetheart of over 60 years, holding a photo of their wedding day. They live in a hut they built by hand, constructed of straw and mud, which they have camouflaged on the inside with flowered wallpaper.

I visited Etta Moiseyevna (right), a stroke victim. Due to your help, we were able to provide her with home care to assist in cooking, cleaning and other tasks which she can no longer do for herself.



I am pictured here with Blukha Yakovlevna, 90 (left). Also pictured, is Sima Borisovna, 99, (below) holding old family photos.

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It was a joy to see both elderly women doing well and receiving necessary care thanks to your contributions to *The Survivor Mitzvah Project*.



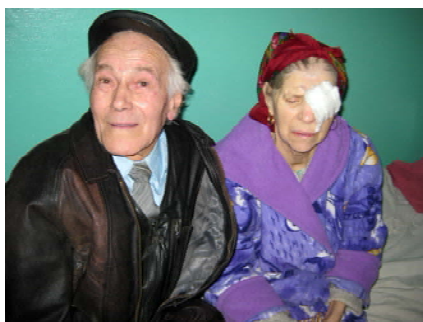
*Here is the only child we saw, Pasha, pictured with his great-grandfather, Isaak Usmanovich.*



*We are proud to tell you that your help saved Isaac's eyesight. We previously sent money for one eye surgery, which was successful, and left him money on this trip for an operation on the second eye. The boy and the great-grandfather have an extraordinary and loving relationship. It makes one wonder about the life that could have been for these people, had they grown into old age surrounded by family and community. But fate was not so kind.*

Again and again during our humanitarian trip to Ukraine we witnessed the dramatic change in the health and well-being of so many elderly survivors and saw the miraculous impact of your aid and friendship.

But not every survivor is a success story. Sadly, Isaak's beloved wife was in the hospital; her eye was removed due to untreated diabetes. They couldn't afford the \$39/monthly eye drops that could have prevented this catastrophe. *Isaak & Galina, (below right) at age 17.*



For most, extreme poverty pervades, especially for those we have newly discovered or those without family or other assistance.



*Raisa Borisovna, above, 86 years old, lives alone in a tiny village in her dilapidated hut with no indoor plumbing, and no heat except for firewood that must be chopped.*

*One of our survivors led us to this woman (below). Her hut had burned down the previous week and her adult son froze to death as a result. Her situation is dire as she cannot walk due to a broken hip and the walls of her hut are now just flattened cardboard boxes. She has no heat, no plumbing, and no one to care for her.*



*We gave her some emergency funding but she desperately needs additional ongoing assistance. To the right is what is left of her "kitchen."*



*Tsilya Davidovna, (left), suffering from a multitude of life-threatening diseases, lives in extreme poverty with a severely handicapped grandson who has palsy and cannot move his twisted limbs. The family has no wheelchair or therapy for this 20-year-old who has a sharp mind and a talent for poetry. Ashamed of his handicap, he stays in a small shack where he tends to the goat they keep for kosher milk. It is a terrible situation. They need emergency medical help, and basic aid.*



*Isaak and Bella (left) are both 85. She is bedridden. He can barely walk, but he cares for her and his older invalid sister, Sonia (right) in a tiny, ramshackle flat. We have been helping them for many years and they have twice-weekly home care and prepared meals delivered. Sonia, handicapped since birth, fell in the street some months ago and developed a tumor, which needs to be removed. They all require serious medical attention.*





*Fira Isaakievna, 88, (left) lives alone in a tiny town in what can only be called a hovel, with no plumbing, no outhouse, and crumbling walls made of mud and straw. Suffering from multiple untreated ailments, her unfailing optimism belies the fact that she is struggling to survive.*

*I am giving emergency funds to Fira B. (right) who suffers from an untreated debilitating disease. As a 5-year-old child she spent four horrific years tortured and starved in a slave labor camp, where her family perished. Now, ill and alone, she has no home care and no other help of any kind. The Survivor Mitzvah Project provides for her needed medications and hospitalizations.*



*We discovered Avraham, 90, (left), and his wife on this mission. They live in a mud and straw hut that they built themselves and are the last surviving Jews in a tiny village that is virtually unchanged since the war years. He fought at the Russian Front for five years during World War II, returning to find his entire family massacred. We have added them to our list of people needing assistance.*

These are just a few of the survivors we help. There are hundreds more in Ukraine as well as Lithuania, Latvia, Moldova, Belarus, Slovakia, and Russia, who desperately need our assistance.

At this moment, all of our survivors are experiencing an immediate emergency: The world economic crisis is impacting their lives to a crushing degree. We are extremely worried that many of the survivors will not make it through the coming months.

Here's why:

- Costs for food and medicines are continuing to skyrocket at alarming rates. Meanwhile, their pensions, if any, are meager and, due to the world economic crisis, being reduced to just a few dollars a day, if that. What little money they might have saved during a lifetime of work disappeared when the banks shut down during Perestroika.
- Many cannot afford heating fuel to help them survive the harsh Russian winter. Heating fuel for the winter months alone is more than their entire annual income. And those in their 80s and 90s who are living in the countryside and who are too feeble to chop wood necessary to heat their huts must hire a person to help with these chores.
- A majority of survivors suffer from untreated illnesses: diabetes, heart ailments, pulmonary problems, cancer, tumors and other conditions that are treatable with medication, surgery and/or regular medical attention.

- Many are going blind from untreated glaucoma – they cannot afford the eye drops, which cost \$39 per month. Others are losing their sight because they cannot afford the \$400 cataract surgery.
- Many are bedridden and need walkers, home health care, and assistance with shopping, cooking and cleaning.
- Free medical care or medical insurance is not available in these countries, forcing them to pay “Western” rates for medications and choose between buying medicine, food or heating fuel.
- Survivors in Moldova, the poorest country in Eastern Europe, are suffering the worse conditions. Our colleagues overseas found an elderly Jewish woman, educated and from a good family, begging on the streets in the middle of winter. Unable to afford the basic necessities of life, she was forced to rent out her apartment and live on the streets so she could manage to pay for food.

For these last survivors of the Shoah, *The Survivor Mitzvah Project* is their only lifeline. No government, or other charity or organization provides them with emergency financial aid.

*The Survivor Mitzvah Project* is a success – in great part thanks to you. With your help, we continue to assist hundreds and hundreds of elderly survivors so that they can live out their days in comfort and dignity. Thousands more wait for help.

The need greatly exceeds our capacity to help all who are suffering. To adequately care for these people, and the more than one thousand survivors who are waiting, we need to raise \$1.6 million to provide them with a monthly stipend of \$100 to \$150 per month for their basic needs.

This year we are reaching out to all of you, our dedicated and compassionate donors, to help us meet this goal.

Please be as generous as you can.

Best regards,



Zane Buzby