

*“I speak of your faithfulness and salvation.”*

*Psalm 40:10*

Through Bella I met many survivors. Some always talked about the Camps; others, like herself, could never fully share. Today I so much regret, that I did not record each story, which have so much importance. Looking back I understand even more how privileged I am, to have shared my life with them.

I remember with warm feelings a survivor of the ship „Struma“ —a man, Nunik Spatz, who often came on Shabbat to visit. He always carried with himself a „small treasure“ in his pocket—a small piece of paper signed by Oskar Schindler, way before the movie came out. Or an almost 92-year old Ukrainian survivor who said to me: „Inge, I am your gift!“ And truly, she was a big gift for me!



*Inge with Sima 2011*

I did not need to look for them. Wherever I went, in a store or at a bus stop, it seemed wherever I went I met Holocaust survivors. With some it was only a short encounter, but others like Mrs. Fish, it meant building a long-term relationship. Through this small first encounter, she still receives help from another organisation, even today. All of this seemed to me a clear confirmation, that I was in God's will in serving the Holocaust survivors, especially as a German Christian.

Even though I hardly ever have experienced any animosity from the survivors because I am German, I still want to say, that it was somehow very different and much harder to gain the trust of a Holocaust survivor in the early years. Today many bridges have been built and some reconciliation has taken place between Germans and survivors.

However, I would like to share that sometimes when I had a bit of a „hard start“ with a survivor, I simply continued to serve and bless, and often the Lord opened their hearts and the closest friendships developed.

In one such case the survivor would not go to the hospital without me, knowing she would die. I am aware, that this love between us, only God himself could have given. So many thoughts come to me to share.

They had reason to blame, but so often it was the survivors comforting me, telling me a story where maybe one German soldier did something good, just to make me feel better—especially when they detected my personal struggle to work through the tremendous feelings of guilt and shame of „being German.“ It is, thanks to them, that I can say today: I am whole as a German. Our God has used the survivors, to bring about my healing.

I heard so many stories of suffering and loss, but also tremendous stories of overcoming. The way they kept the strength to fight for life, I would call today a real victory. You can certainly see total brokenness and indescribable pain, but on the other side you see the most beautiful people, who overcame in life, for the most part, not being ruled by any hate and bitterness at all. This is victory and a work of the God of Israel.

As much as I have experienced, I do feel I still know „nothing“, and only have the need to learn more.

At some point I was asked to help the organization, „Nechama.“ I ended up volunteering there for about seven years, with the wonderful vision to serve— especially as Germans— in simple ways, and bring some comfort. I have seen, that it was the practical help that often was the key to the survivors' hearts. I could also share a lot about my great time working together with Sharon Sanders in CFI's Holocaust department. When we travelled to the former Soviet Union, we looked for, and visited, many precious Holocaust survivors—the ones Sharon called: “Real treasures in darkness!” I remember with a joyful, grateful heart these times.

The Lord has led me step by step. When I met many lonely survivors, or saw on our trips, the precious elderly who wanted to immigrate to Israel, but had no contact person here in the land and so never had the courage to make this important step of coming 'home', so my vision for a “Home and Center for the Holocaust-survivors” grew. In myself it was totally impossible to open “Ner Yaakov”, - but it was not impossible for the Lord.

Today I will only share up until the point we started Ner Yaakov. How this came about will maybe be a subject for another newsletter.

And as this is a letter of “Thanksgiving”, I also want to take this opportunity to thank my friends, who have supported me personally for so many years: Thank you!

All these years here—believe me—it has never been easy. Actually there were many, many hard times, but I am blessed!

It has been a joy to share a part of my life with you and I hope, that you can rejoice with me over God's faithfulness.

*Thou art worthy! Rev. 4:10*



