

ARIE LITVAK SHARES WITH US:

*“Say to the captives, ‘Come out,’
and to those in darkness, ‘Be free!’*

*They will feed beside the roads
and find pasture on every barren hill.”*

Isaiah 49:9



Arie

Arie, our good friend, was born in Zmerinka, Ukraine in 1939. He had two brothers and one sister. The grandparents and his many uncles and aunts all lived in the same neighborhood.

In November 1941 the fascists came to the town and took Arie, his parents, his siblings, and other family members to an isolated part of town, where out of only three streets a Ghetto was created. About 3000 people were in this Ghetto and several families had to live in only one house. Inside the Ghetto were Ukrainian policemen and also Romanian guards; on the outside, Germans.

They were in the Ghetto from 1941 until March 1944, and suffered from terrible cold and hunger. They constantly fought for survival—in seeking places to hide from the „German killing – raids.“ The deepest pain Arie shared was: „My mother died in the Ghetto! In 1943 she took in an orphan girl who was ill with Typhus and my mother saved her life.

The girl survived, but my mother was infected. When somebody had Typhus, it needed to be kept very secret, because the Germans were very scared of Typhus and just shot the ill-stricken people. I later heard different reports about my mother’s death. Somebody said she died of Typhus; another said she was shot!“ One night Ukrainian guards took Arie’s father and beat him so terribly that they almost broke his back!

It was the partisans who liberated them and they were evacuated to Chernovtsy, West Ukraine. But even there they suffered again from hunger, and in 1947, the ‚NKVD‘ (like the KGB) arrested Arie’s father, beat him, and broke his teeth. After the war, back in the time of Stalin, Jewish Holocaust-survivors were often accused of ‚helping the Nazis.‘ „How else could Jewish people have survived the Nazis?“ was, what these criminals figured. This is why many survivors who lived in Russia after the war—out of fear of being so wrongly accused by Stalin’s helpers—could not even talk about their survival in Nazi death camps. Many ended up again in Russian labor camps.

„My brother and sister ran away to Tashkent and I was left alone with my brother Valodia,“ shares Arie. „From 1950 I was able to go to school. In the morning I worked and in the afternoon I went to school until the year 1957, when I went to work in the Donbas coal mines. With whom did I have to work there? My „co-workers“ were captive German war-prisoners! Afterwards I studied in a technical school in Tashkent and worked in an Oil Research Institution. We survived a very bad earthquake, and in 1966, we were given a flat in the suburb of Leningrad.“

However Arie’s suffering had not stopped. In 1980, he was arrested and imprisoned by the KGB. „I was in prison for five years, totally closed off, without even having had a trial. The KGB’s accusation was: „Anti-Soviet!“ and I received a 13-year sentence. After eight years, when Gorbachev came to power, I was released and in 1991, I was rehabilitated.“ It is a whole other story how Arie finally came to Israel in 1990. He came as a tourist and never went back to the former Soviet Union. His daughter, after she got married and changed her family name, was able to come to Israel first. Arie said to me at the end: „The only thing we survivors want is, that something like that will never happen again!“

*“They will neither hunger nor thirst... He who has compassion on them will guide them
and lead them beside springs of water.”*

Isaiah 49:10

1. Inge visiting in Hadera—together with Arie and Pavel at a small museum in Hadera
2. The two close friends

