



# CHOOSING TOMORROW - LA'AD

Companionship and Emergency Assistance  
for Needy Holocaust Survivors in Israel



January 2021



## Support the Project

**An estimated 40% of Israel's Holocaust survivors feel lonely, a factor which has a direct negative impact on their physical health and emotional wellbeing. A generous donation of 100,000 EURO will support the Choosing Tomorrow La'ad initiative that awards university students tuition scholarships in exchange for volunteering with Holocaust survivors in need, providing them with companionship and assistance to access benefits that they are entitled to.**

## College Students Volunteering to Help Israel's Holocaust Survivors

Feelings of loneliness among people of all ages, especially Holocaust survivors, have only intensified since the outbreak of the Coronavirus as social distancing measures and health regulations significantly limit interaction. For Holocaust survivors, time is of the essence and the need to provide them with targeted assistance, and companionship is essential now, more than ever.

Five years ago, the Jewish Agency, together with Keren Hayesod-United Israel Appeal, launched an initiative called Choosing Tomorrow La'ad to train college students to help alleviate loneliness and assist Israel's Holocaust survivors with additional needs, in exchange for college scholarships.

Since then, Choosing Tomorrow La'ad has been reaching out to Holocaust survivors in Israel, with holistic programmes to address their welfare through organized events and initiatives for the elderly. Participation in Choosing Tomorrow La'ad fosters networks of active young adults who are for their communities and for the interests of local Holocaust survivors. The programme builds on the energy of outstanding college students who fulfil the critical need among Holocaust survivors for companionship and assistance, while creating a strong intergenerational sense of community and responsibility around the principles of civic inclusion, remembrance, and social justice. The programme also trains students to address the various issues facing Holocaust survivors, from financial hardship to social isolation.

## Project Description

The programme provides ongoing training sessions focusing on the psycho-sociological aspects of working with Holocaust survivors, approaches to Holocaust remembrance, and community work as a basis for leading positive societal change. The training curriculum includes information about helping survivors access available services such as learning how to file government requests for help and alerting relevant professionals when needed. The students also complete a special training session that covers the legal aspects of State and charitable benefits pertaining to Holocaust survivors.

One of the most unique aspects of Choosing Tomorrow La'ad is the one-on-one connections it builds as students visit survivors in their home each week, becoming friends as well as advocates and sources of support. Due to the Coronavirus, home visits will continue in accordance with government health regulations in order to protect the health of the survivors. These visits are even more critical now because the students help to alleviate loneliness by conversing with survivors and going on outings with them to coffee shops, parks, and cultural events. They also help with daily needs such as filling out forms, performing household chores, and accompanying survivors on errands and medical appointments.

The financial hardships of the Holocaust survivors continue to be an evolving need. Students often enter run-down homes and encounter empty cabinets and refrigerators. With the rising cost of living and reduced funding for aging populations in Israel, we anticipate that the survivors' conditions will only worsen. As part of the programme, emergency grants of approximately €1,275 are allocated to Holocaust survivors in need.

## Personal Story

The following article was translated from the Onlife website

<https://www.onlife.co.il/news/society/328739>

Through a unique initiative that is connecting between university students and Holocaust survivors, a deep friendship is being woven between twenty-four-year-old Amit Tendler and ninety-one-year-old Yosef Sholt. There are a lot of internal jokes and a lot to talk about.

"Amit is very important to me. Since she came into my life, we have been meeting every week and talk about everything. From the moment we met, I knew that I could talk to her and things would be ok. The age difference between us is only sixty years."

These are Yosef's words to describe his connection to Amit. Yosef is a Holocaust survivor who lives in Beer Sheva. He is part of the Jewish Agency's Choosing Tomorrow La'ad, an initiative in which university students volunteer for a period of two years on behalf of Holocaust survivors in exchange for tuition scholarships. The students are paired with survivors, who they meet on a weekly basis, and offer them emotional support as well as assistance to access their rights and entitlement benefits. In the process, the students help alleviate feelings of loneliness and help survivors improve their quality of life.

The uniqueness of the Choosing Tomorrow La'ad initiative lies in the deep personal and social connections between each student-survivor pair. It is much more than a volunteer internship in exchange for university tuition support.

The friendship between Yosef and Amit is also very special to Amit, who is studying towards her Master's in Social Work student at Ben Gurion University. This is the second year that she has been volunteering with Yosef and Amit plans to stay in touch with him after she completes her Master's Degree. "My social work advisor conducted a lot of interviews in order to pair me with a Holocaust survivor. In my opinion, she made the perfect match. Me and Yosef have unique but different personalities... Yosef recently celebrated his 91st birthday, but I do not consider him to be an nonagenarian. He laughs a lot, has a great sense of humor and is a conversationalist. I always say, Yosef is my friend."

From Yosef's perspective, their connection is also very special, and very much appreciated during this difficult period of the Corona pandemic. "We sit two meters apart and talk about all of the issues in

the world, and we help each other. Amit even asks me about dating...I do not like to be lonely. I visit a local non-profit that has activities for Holocaust survivors twice a week and also do yoga. I really like people and when Amit comes to visit me, the room is filled with so much light.”

In a joint interview with the two, it was evident just how deep their connection is. Amit manages to make Yosef laugh and her very presence calms him down. He, in turn, shares his many life experiences including immigrating from Hungary to Israel and being on the famous Exodus ship as well as his life in Israel. When you see how someone listens with excitement and sparkling eyes to every word of a 91-year-old, you realize how much the program gives to both generations.

Choosing Tomorrow La’ad is a joint initiative between the Jewish Agency, Keren Hayesod-UIA, Mifal Hapayis, The Broward County Federation, the Obershel Foundation, the Foundation for the Welfare of Holocaust Victims, AMCHA Beer Sheva, the Be’er Sheva Municipality and the Rishon Lezion Municipality. The initiative was developed to empower Israel’s younger generation to play a significant role and have an impact on the lives of Holocaust survivors in Israel. Unlike other programs, Choosing Tomorrow La’ad is a holistic program in which the student volunteers meet with a program coordinator who facilitates workshops and activities that connect them to social issues related to Holocaust survivors and the role of young people vis a vis Holocaust survivors and the elderly. The program coordinator also offers the student volunteers guidance and support in how to process their emotions. The entire process is designed to provide each volunteer with the tools to maximize the support and impact that they have the lives of each Holocaust survivor, while promoting values of social and civic responsibility.

The past year coping with the Coronavirus pandemic was not easy for Amit or Yosef. However, Amit refused to give up meeting Yosef. In order to do so, she reduces her social contact with others and maintains maximum social distancing. “In my opinion, there is a quiet aspect of the pandemic—depression,” says Amit. “That is why it’s so important for me to meet Yosef, so he does not feel alone. It requires more of me. But I am careful and do everything possible to take care of myself so that we can meet. It is totally worth it and I know how significant it is to Yosef. It gives us both meaning.”

## Budget

EXPENSES (1)	Budget Euro (2)
Management by Choosing Tomorrow headquarters staff	€ 8,920
Program coordination and professional instruction	€ 4,130
Student guidance - by a local coordinator (25% position)	€ 12,390
Stipends	€ 39,040
Training on Holocaust education	€ 2,730
Community events for survivors and volunteers to come together	€ 8,670
Support services (3)	€ 7,600
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>€ 83,480</b>
Emergency grants for Holocaust survivors - 1,239.33 Euro for each survivor (optimal)	€ 18,590

## Notes

- (1) The expenses represent the costs of a single group of 15 pairs of students and survivors in the program.
- (2) All projected amounts are subject to changes due to change in cost increases, currency rate fluctuations, increases in expenses, and program updates.
- (3) All expenses include support services which are inclusive of management, supervision and indirect operational costs for the implementation of the programs.

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