

OUR IMPACT

Overseas Stories:

For Survivor, Hesed Alleviates Struggle of Daily Life



When his wife broke her hip and became bedbound, Varlen turned to the Hesed for help taking care

of her. “I got medical aid, diapers, and everything I needed to ensure her comfort,” he says. Varlen, 82, can still remember the power of the Nazi’s boot kicking his side before he was sent into forced labor for the German war machine. He was only 13, but his experiences in German-occupied Kiev transformed his adolescence into a daily battle for survival that he still recounts in vivid detail. “I never thought I would live to age 82.

To have lived through occupation still seems unbelievable because of how vicious those times were,” he says.

Today his life is a very different kind of struggle. Like thousands of elderly Jews in Ukraine and throughout the former Soviet Union, Varlen relies on JDC’s Hesed social welfare programs for the vital services and material support that help him stretch his modest pension to the end of each month.

Varlen first heard about the Kiev Hesed from his neighbors—fellow Jews in his strong, close-knit community who always celebrate the holidays together and are also part of

“I never thought I would live to age 82. To have lived through occupation still seems unbelievable because of how vicious those times were.”

the Hesed network. When his wife broke her hip and became bedbound, he turned to the Hesed for help taking care of her. “I got medical aid, diapers, and everything I needed to ensure her comfort,” he says.

Today Varlen depends on Hesed for his own well-being—services like home care, subsidized medication, and a special debit card for purchasing food at his local supermarket. “Hesed keeps us alive,” Varlen says. “And that means we can be there for one another and remain a community in our old age.”

