



Our dear friends, Shalom!

Ephesians 4:1: "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received". This verse has been much on my mind in the last months, both from a personal point of view and in connection with our work in the Home, raising the questions that are being asked in this verse: Why am I here? Why does the Home exist? The important question is therefore: Am I fulfilling my calling? Does the Home justify its existence? These questions need to be examined in the light of God's calling, and in light of everything we have done so far in our everyday work and in all that is connected with our planning for the future.

On April 14th 2016, the Ebenezer Home will be celebrating its 40th anniversary! Preparations for the celebration are underway, and of course a significant part of it will be dedicated to reviewing past events while focusing on God's unceasing faithfulness and grace to the Ebenezer Home during these decades. These things are also the source of our hope for the future, for "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it!" (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

We thank God that once again we received very good reports from the Ministry of Welfare during their comprehensive inspection for our license renewal. But once again, the importance and urgency of building a nursing department was emphasized, so that in the

future we would be able to provide this very important service for our residents, according to the regulations required by the law.

We are making progress with construction drawings, but in this race there are still several bureaucratic hurdles to be overcome. In addition to this, the Beit Eliahu congregation adjacent to us and the Norwegian church (NCMI) are considering the expansion of the Beit Eliahu congregational center, so we are examining the possibility of submitting the construction plans to the municipality for both projects at the same time. Both buildings are located on the same plot of land belonging to the Lutheran World Federation.



Celebrating the Jewish New Year in EEH garden

In the meantime, we are encouraged by what the Lord is doing among us, in our everyday life. What a great blessing it is to hear a resident who was absent for a few days saying, "It's good to be home!" In the last six months, four new residents have joined the Home: Antoinette from Jerusalem, Paula from Bat Yam, Rachel from Bnei Ayish and Ron from Haifa. At present we have 29 residents in the Home, and the average age is 86.



Every resident who comes to live in the Home has a special, unique story behind the circumstances that brought them to the home. Antoinette's story highlights the importance of Ebenezer's existence. She applied to enter the Home months ago, intending to enter with her best friend of 44 years, Susan. Antoinette ministered together with Susan in France and in Africa, and they made Aliya together in 1987 and shared an apartment in Jerusalem. After approving both their requests, we learnt that they both became sick and were hospitalized as a result. The condition of their health fluctuated for several weeks, and eventually Susan passed away. Due to her poor health Antoinette couldn't return to her apartment nor could we receive her since she had become a nursing case. She was taken to an elderly home in Jerusalem and stayed there for four months. Antoinette

says that over and above mourning the loss of her dear friend, she also had to deal with loneliness and even rejection from other residents in that home. All this brought her to the point where she despaired even of life. But thanks to the determined efforts of two dear brothers from Jerusalem, who made sure she received the love and medical care she needed, her condition improved and stabilized so that our Home was able to take her in. Antoinette arrived in our home with mixed feelings. The most evident was that she had lost her faith in people and thought that at the age of 89 there was no point in continuing to live for no one would really care about her. We thank God that her fears were proved wrong! Today, several months after moving in, even though she still misses her dear friend, she finds true love and comfort among brothers and sisters in the Home and her condition has improved amazingly! One day she told me, "I feel the love here like oxygen!" These things remind us how much the love of the Lord sustains and refreshes us and paints the greys of reality in eternal colors of hope! For us as a Senior Citizens' Home, it's a real privilege to serve a sister like her, who dedicated many years of her life to serve others – this is the purpose of our Home!

During the last summer months of the year we sweated not only because of extreme heat and oppressive humidity, but also because of pressing circumstances. After replacing the heating system the previous year, we were preparing to replace the cooling system at the end of this past winter. David, our maintenance manager, planned the compressor system and ordered all the necessary parts from China. According to information we received, the container was supposed to arrive within three months. In the meantime we prepared the infrastructure so that when the compressor system arrived it could be connected immediately and air conditioners turned on. The spring months passed, thankfully with pleasant weather, but to our disappointment the container didn't arrive as promised. We had to wait one more nerve-racking month until the compressor system finally arrived and was installed at the beginning of July. We truly thank God that the system started working just a few days before the first extreme heat wave of the summer. We thank all the organizations that supported us and helped us with this project. The new system is expected to save us over NIS 10,000 a year on energy expenditure!



Farewell party for Sonya and Bernie – volunteering couple

Also this year we were blessed by the Lord sending us faithful volunteers. Some of them had opportunities of volunteering in more 'exciting' places than a Home for the elderly, but in our eyes their volunteering at Ebenezer comes from a true calling which is evident in their dedication. This year we had volunteers from Germany, Denmark, Mexico, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Russia, England and the USA. In addition, every now and again we receive groups of volunteers who come to us from the USA, Denmark and Sweden for short periods of time in order to help with whatever needed and at the same time they have the opportunity of learning about the Home.

We were also blessed by local volunteers this year! Among the teens and young people, either just before or after their army service, were some who spent several weeks volunteering at the Home: Neomi P., Shalom V., Nathaniel G., Michal L. and Versaviah Y. Some of them had decided to do their personal community service (part of the school program) in the Home - the more the better!

Children always bring smiles to our residents' faces. In the recent years, several Christian Arab schools and kindergartens in Haifa have been coming to visit the Home during the Christmas holidays. You can see one of these groups in the picture on the left – 5-year-olds who came to perform, sing and give gifts to the residents (some of these children are from believers' families). We thank God for this initiative that strengthens the connection with local congregations and people in the neighborhood!



Indeed we have had much to thank the Lord for in this past year. At the end of December we organized a party with the residents and members of their families so we could give thanks to the Lord. This time the leading of the worship was inter-generational: Alex Atlas, the son of Rachel (one of our new residents) led us in worship together with members of his congregation, and Or-El Mizrachi, Nissim's granddaughter, blessed us with the song she sang.

We take this opportunity to thank you once again, our dear friends, for your prayers and your faithful support and love during the year. May the Lord reward you with grace upon grace!

In His love,
Johnny & Shoshanna Khoury