

Finger on the Pulse

by Dr. Faith Goldberg, Ebenezer Medical Doctor



An Intimate Connection – Interview with Shmuel and Bjorg Aweida

"What might someone be surprised to know about you?" I asked Shmuel and Bjorg.

I interviewed them in Shmuel's air-conditioned office, located on the ground floor of his congregation, Bet Eliyahu. The congregation is about ten steps away from Ebenezer Home.

The question seemed to stump them both; they didn't feel there was much that people don't know about them, they live and work on-site.

"In my spare time I run, but I hate it." Shmuel replied with a smile. "If I could, I would take up car racing as a hobby."

Shmuel is a full-time pastor and acts as chairman of the board of Ebenezer. Bjorg and Shmuel have a long and rich connection with Ebenezer Home. At the age of eight, Shmuel remembers running down the corridors of Ebenezer with his best friend, Tepo, the son of the first manager of Ebenezer. Shmuel grew up with the current manager of the home, Johnny Khoury, who was a year above him in the same school.



Bjorg came from Norway in 1986, as a volunteer for NCMI (Norwegian Church Mission to Israel). Her passion was to serve the congregation and work as a volunteer in Ebenezer which provided the necessary visa. She met Shmuel at Bet Eliyahu, where she was his youth leader. Shmuel and Bjorg married in Norway, where Shmuel went on to study to be a pastor. After eight years, the birth of their three children and pastoring a congregation in Norway, they returned to Israel.

Shmuel's father died and his mother, Ratiba, managed for some years alone at home. Due to failing health Shmuel suggested that she move into Ebenezer. At first

this was met with resistance, Ratiba was fearful of losing her independence. However, due to connections she already had with some of the residents and staff of Ebenezer, she eventually felt comfortable to make the transition.

"The nurses and volunteers would daily walk with my mother, she suffered from Parkinson's and every step was an effort. They were amazingly patient with her. At the end of her life she needed full nursing care." Shmuel said. "We were in the process of applying for permission for her to continue to stay at Ebenezer, when the social service department demanded that within a week, she be transferred to another home for the elderly, that had a nursing ward."

"You can imagine what a trauma that was for all of our family. Just when Ratiba really needed a familiar and supportive environment, her future at Ebenezer was uncertain." Bjorg said.

"Thankfully, mother went to be with the Lord before a transfer was necessary. It helped us to understand the importance for Ebenezer to have a nursing ward." Shmuel added.

"What do you find most challenging about your responsibility with Ebenezer?" I asked.

"Proximity." Replied Shmuel, "Living on-site means being available, this can mean anything from helping switch off a fire alarm to dealing with intruders."

On a weekly basis Shmuel comes to have lunch with the workers and residents. In a real way, Ebenezer Home is undergirded by Shmuel and Bjorg's faithful presence and labor of love.

Bread and Fish - Devotional

by **Johnny Khoury**, Ebenezer Managing Director



"You are hugging your residents too tight!" That was the "accusation" I got during one of the annual inspection visits. "If so..., then I plead guilty!" I replied. This happened during the time we were struggling to keep Ratiba, Shmuel's mother, in the Home, together with other dependent residents we had. I remember very well the pressure I had at the time - the inspector demanded that all nursing patients should leave to other homes, even though there was no doubt that they received the best treatment at Ebenezer Home! I couldn't understand what was happening... what was the right thing to do? It is written in 1 Pet. 2, 12: "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation..." But the next verse continues: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution...". This matter literally brought me to my knees!

The Lord answered our prayers and thankfully no resident had to leave the Home.

As much as the process was frustrating and painful, it was not in vain. Looking back, it helped us fulfil the verses in a balanced way. On the one hand, it was an opportunity to be a testimony of Christian love and care that are beyond financial considerations; our residents are not just identity numbers, they are part of our family. On the other hand, this event motivated us to seriously consider building a nursing ward. This is the place to mention that we are so thankful to have just received the message that the municipality approved our renovation and building plans. Now that we have the permit we can proceed to the next stage - recruiting professional consultants and setting a timetable for the building process. The challenge is huge, but our Lord is greater! Thank you for your faithful prayers and support!

What's New?

by **Christie Livingstone**, Ebenezer Home Secretary



Music has a special place in our lives. Several of our residents are professional musicians, others have family members who are; but everyone at Ebenezer likes to sing and listen to music. Music is a language that does not need translation because it speaks to our hearts. The trio that you see on our Facebook page get together once a week to rehearse. Music is always playing in the background in the activity room. Every Thursday Jay comes for an hour of piano playing and the residents eagerly wait to hear their favorite hymns. Our resident Fern, sits at the piano every morning after breakfast to play uplifting music. Lunch begins and ends with a chorus of thanksgiving, and singing together is also part of the morning coffee break in the garden on a fine day.

Besides bringing back many memories, music can unite people and bring healing. Knowing this, about a year ago our social worker, Ilana, started a music group, where all residents are welcome to sing, use instruments and share tunes.



Many topics and stories come up during these meetings since our residents come from very diverse backgrounds. Some memories are painful, but everything shared doesn't go beyond those walls, so residents feel encouraged and secure to share. They learn more about each other and begin to appreciate and understand each other in new ways. This is so important especially because they come from diverse backgrounds and cultures and can enrich each other by sharing.

On one occasion, after hearing a particularly touching story, our social worker picked up her harp and played this story as a melody. Everyone became very quiet as they listened. This was an amazing experience, a beautiful tune reflecting a life. Scripture says that God rejoices over us with singing. I wonder what tunes are being sung in heaven? One day we will hear the song that has been composed up there about us!