

EBENEZER HOME

ANNUAL REPORT 2002/2003



“ See how the lilies of the field grow...

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BROADENING THE COOPERATION OF THE LOCAL CONGREGATIONS IN THE SOCIAL/SPIRITUAL WORK OF THE EBENEZER HOME IN HAIFA

By Gershon Nerel (Chairman of the Local Management Committee)

The “Ebenezer Home for the Elderly” in Haifa (EEH) belongs to the entire Body of Messiah in Israel, both Jewish and Arab believers in Yeshua. This fact is being manifest day by day for almost 30 years. On the threshold of the 21st century the Home is facing new challenges, just as the State of Israel does. In Israel, as around the world the population of the elderly people or the ‘senior citizens’ is constantly growing. The lifespan is being constantly prolonged. Being elderly is not a sickness, but in reality the so-called GOLDEN AGE is not always shining or glorious. There are often problems of physical health, loneliness and difficulties with adjustment, alongside difficulties of forgetfulness and insomnia. Usually the elderly people need help – indeed sometimes they badly need much help and care, no less than babies and infants.

Who will provide that help for those who are beyond 70, 80 & 90? Will the children and the relatives - or, in fact, will the local congregation take that responsibility? In any case, it should be remembered that space at Ebenezer is very limited – only 30 beds; the required payments are elementary, without any profit to the Home while the costs are increasingly rising! Actually the Home is still dependent upon gifts from overseas. At the same time, the nursing cases are always increasing.

On November 1st 2002 the Israeli daily *MA'ARIV* published a gloomy article about the elderly population in Israel. This article demonstrates a shocking and shameful situation. Many “Batei-Avot” (Homes for the Elderly) are under-qualified. The nursing cases particularly reflect the worst situation. Even some of the fancy and luxurious Homes in Israel are disappointing and not trustworthy. Thus, for example, utilities are not replaced as frequently as needed. In one case, for example, the diapers of an eighty-year old lady fell on the floor in front of all residents because nobody came to replace them. She fell in tears facing all those present.

The Israeli Government is in fact reducing its financial commitments for the elderly population. This is happening while the “modern world” is exalting the younger people – so giving less attention for the elderly. At the same time, the age of retirement and the activity beyond 65 is continually prolonged.

Consequently, the elderly people themselves prefer to remain in their own homes and are delaying, as much as possible, their move into an established Home for the elderly. However, the spouses and the children are not always able to assume full responsibility for the elderly, especially when the elderly become nursing cases. Moreover, too frequently we are observing sad occasions that the elderly cannot get enough support within the families of their own children or relatives. Sometimes the children are non-believers in Yeshua and the atmosphere around them and their homes is not welcoming for the believing parents.

Furthermore, sometimes children of the elderly attempt to take for themselves the savings and/or the property of their parents, without taking into consideration the need to use the money for covering – justly – the expenses of taking care of the elderly. In such cases the burden and the responsibilities for caring for the elderly falls on the local congregations and charitable organizations. Thus the social/nursing/financial load on the community is getting heavier. Several points for thought:

- Which “system” will help our elderly? Obviously ONE Home (EEH) in Israel is not able to meet all the needs of today and the decade ahead of us.
- Is it realistic to build another Home - or - several more Homes? Or – is it more realistic to *join efforts* – the Congregations getting help from the HOME by professionals, providing ADVICE, Consultation and SOCIAL TOOLS (DIAKONIA).
- Providing *Short Periods* of retreat and rest at the Home – BOTH for the elderly and for their relatives.

We must develop strategic thinking for the future. We must work *together*, cooperate locally as strategic partners. The emphasis should be on finding new solutions based upon spiritual as well as practical input. We must combine several dimensions into one major effort, bringing together spiritual, social, educational, and financial aspects. Time passes quickly. If we do not prepare a solid infrastructure today, then tomorrow it will be much more difficult. We need people with a vision not only for the youngsters but also for the elderly.

Thus, for example, the summer youth camps (*Kaitanot*) should prepare new programs that will share the needs of the elderly. On a more regular basis the congregations should develop more AWARENESS, CARE, COMMITMENT, LONG-RANGE PERSPECTIVE, OPENNESS FOR COOPERATION LOCALLY and INTERNATIONALLY. Particularly EDUCATION is of utmost importance: thinking of and preparing staff; nurses; social/spiritual workers etc. The FINANCIAL DUTY goes without saying – both individuals and congregations, Messianic institutions and organizations, must assume full responsibility. We need believers with PERSEVERANCE and FAITHFULNESS to this special call.

All of us have to remember two BIBLICAL principles – first, to care for those who are really in need: “*Honor widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents – for this is good and acceptable before God*” (1 Timothy 5: 3-4). Second, there is much encouragement and hope for all of us, as we are all getting older - “*Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day*” (2 Corinthians 4: 16).

Practical conclusions

- 1) The support of the Home is first of all spiritual. The Home needs your prayers.
- 2) The residents in the Home belong to local congregations. When they entered the Home, they did not stop being members of your congregation. Your responsibility to see that their needs are met is even greater!
- 3) The elders are encouraged to initiate visits to the Home with some of the congregation members and prepare a program for the elderly, also during the festivals. The Home will be happy to cooperate with you.
- 4) Youth groups are also very welcome to visit the Home. There are a number of youth groups that visit the Home and the residents are very happy to see the young people visiting.
- 5) Young believers that have some free months and want to volunteer will be gladly received.
- 6) It was suggested that the Home will publish a journal on a regular basis with more information, news and testimonies of the residents.

The International Board

Member

Marta Eigeles, chairperson (until April)
John Edvard Olsen, Chairperson (from April)
Ulrich Laepple
Matthias Dahl
David Sedaca
Rolf Gunnar Heitmann
John Edvard Olsen (until April)
Heinrich Pedersen
Martti Tuhkanen
Gershon Nerel

Deputy

Berit Meyers (until April)
Havard Kleppe (from April)
Hartmut Renz
Wolfgang Raupach-Rudnik
Ronald Lewis (until April)
Terje Bakke
Havard Kleppe (until April)
Anne-Line Friis
Toini Suopellonmaki
Ruth Denlinger

The International Board had its annual meeting this year on the 6-7 May, 2002. Rolf Gunnar Heitmann functioned as recording secretary at the meeting.

The Executive Committee

Member

Marta Eigeles (until April)
John Edvard Olsen (from April)
Ulrich Laepple
Gershon Nerel

Deputy

John Edvard Olsen (from April)
Marta Eigeles (from April)
Matthias Dahl
Martti Tuhkanen

The Executive Committee held two regular meetings on the 5th May and the 28th November. A special meeting was held on the 8th August regarding Jostein's retirement. John Khoury was recording secretary at all of these meetings.

The Local Management Committee

Member

Gershon Nerel
Samuel Aweida
Fida Ramadan
Ruth Denlinger
Berit Skjeie Meyers

Deputy

Daniel Yahav
Benjamin Shenkman
Naomi Ateeq
Beatrice Seiden
Itai Meron

The manager, assistant manager, housekeeper and social worker were present as observers at these meetings. There were six meetings during the year. The assistant manager functioned as the recording secretary of the LMC meetings.

EBENEZER HOME

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Haifa, April 2003

Gershon Nerel
Chairman LMC



John Khoury
Acting Manager

