

Israel Senior News

News and Issues affecting

Israel's Seniors

בס"ד



Issue #7

July 2008

Tammuz 5768

Dear Readers,

Summer is upon us, and the temperature is not the only thing on the rise. The number of those making Aliyah is increasing as well. Nefesh B'Nefesh, the organization founded in 2002 which has revitalized Aliyah among North American and British citizens, anticipates welcoming 2,000 new Olim from the US, Canada, and the UK this summer.

Senior citizens and retirees aged 55-and-up are expected to comprise a significant proportion of this summer's NBN Olim, totalling approximately 10% of the newcoming population. In their honor, we have decided to dedicate this issue of Israel Senior Life to our newest "Golden-aged" citizens.

Toward this end, we have included an article by NBN's Joy Epstein, MSW which surveys the Aliyah experience for retirees and senior citizens. We have also highlighted one of our many wonderful volunteers who has herself made Aliyah as a retiree.

We bless all the new Olim with an easy and successful Aliyah.

Warm wishes for a restful and enjoyable summer,

Tamara Fine Skversky
Editor

The Aliyah Experience for Retirees and Seniors
by Joy Epstein, MSW

The past five years have seen a large increase in the

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As reported in Haaretz

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IN MEMORIAM: A Tribute to Our Fallen Brothers

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are also those who make Aliyah because they are no longer able to live independently and their children, who live in Israel, want to bring them over to ensure that they receive proper care either at home or in an appropriate nursing home facility.

So what is the Aliyah experience for retirees and senior citizens like? It can be wonderful, but there are inevitably challenges as well. The younger retirees often choose to live independently in the larger cities and avail themselves of the myriad activities, lectures, volunteer, educational, cultural, social and recreational opportunities that the cities offer. Most of these Olim take advantage of the five-month Ulpan programs that are free for Olim Chadashim. There are several such programs that were created specifically for senior citizens. Along with giving these senior Olim a basic working knowledge of Hebrew, the ulpan is a wonderful place to meet other new immigrants and to find support during the first months of Aliyah.

Learning Hebrew often represents one of the biggest hurdles for Olim in general. This often constitutes a greater challenge for senior citizens since, as they age, it becomes more and more difficult to learn new languages. Getting used to the fact that everything is in Hebrew can be a shock to many. One needs to adjust to the reality that the person on the other end of the phone line may not speak English and that the automated menus that one reaches when calling for appointments are completely in Hebrew.

An additional challenge that the senior population faces is needing to adjust to the different cultural norms. For elder Olim, having to learn how to do things from scratch that they have known instinctively how to do all their lives can be both daunting and aggravating. Needing to ask for help in the bank or the supermarket, and not knowing how to find a plumber, electrician, or someone to set up their internet can be very overwhelming. One of the most important things that seniors need to learn is to ask for help.

Starting over with a new health care system can be a difficult experience for many seniors as well. They may have had the same doctors for their entire adult life, and they knew how the medical system worked and what to expect from doctors, clinics, hospitals and pharmacies. Although they know that they are going to get good medical care here, they will need to learn and adjust to a very different medical system, to being much more proactive in their own care, and to accept the fact that doctor's visits are time bound and much



Barbara Roff, an American retiree who made Aliyah with NBN in 2005, volunteers regularly at Ezrat Avot preparing food for the "Senior to Senior" free and healthy meals on wheels program.

Update: New People Being Served by "Senior to Senior"

Each month, Ezrat Avot receives new requests to deliver hot meals to sick and homebound senior citizens all around Jerusalem. Israel Senior Life will now regularly feature a brief description of some of our newest recipients (names have been changed to protect privacy). All suffer from severe financial distress in addition to health problems. Most receive a meager state pension, from which they have to pay for rent and medication, leaving little or no money for food.

Dora is an 86 year old widow and Holocaust survivor (she spent a year and a half in Auschwitz who lives on her own and is unable to cook for herself due to a recent fall and leg operation. Since her hospitalization, Dora also suffers from depression and loneliness. She has no family in Jerusalem, as one son lives in Nazareth-Elite and another in France. Dora is receiving a package of 7 meals a week.

Gila is a 75 year old widow who lives on her own in Ramot and is

less personal.

For those who chose to live close to their children, there are the tremendous rewards of being able to remain actively involved and an ongoing participant in their children's and grandchildren's lives. At the same time, it is important for them to develop their own separate lives and interests. Developing a healthy sense of boundaries for the parents and the children helps to maintain positive relationships.

There are others retirees who decide to start their new lives surrounded by others their age in one of the many beautiful retirement communities that have developed over that past several years. There are many that have large Anglo populations and an English-speaking staff so that the experience of living in a Hebrew speaking environment is minimized. This also enables all the recreational, cultural, and social needs to be met in the community.

For the more infirmed seniors who are coming on Aliyah so that the children can take care of them, the challenges of Aliyah that are mentioned above are coupled with the restructuring of the family dynamics that often occur when children become the care takers and the parents become dependent on them for their needs. On the other hand, for children and their parents this can be a wonderful opportunity to return the care and devotion that they received from their parents and also demonstrate to their children the mitzvah of Kibud Av V'Em, first hand.

Although there are many challenges for Seniors making Aliyah, there are several organizations like Nefesh B'Nefesh, AACI, ESRA, and Ezrat Avot, that give senior Olim the necessary support and resources that they will need to make a successful Aliyah. These services include pre and post-Aliyah seminars, meetings with social workers, support groups, tiyulim, and other educational social programming.

With all the support that seniors citizens are receiving today, and the wide variety of options for enhancing their quality of life available to them, it is no wonder that so many are choosing to make Israel their home.

Survivors Lack Money for Long Hospital Stays

by Ruth Sinai, as printed in Haaretz

Itzhak Widder says that his father now weighs the same as when he was liberated from the Mauthausen death camp in 1945 - 41 kilograms. Shalom Widder, 90, has been at Hartzfeld Geriatric Hospital in Gadera for the past month. He has lost the ability to swallow

homebound following a leg operation. Gilda also suffers from diabetes, high blood pressure and recently underwent a hysterectomy for cancer of the womb. Gilda receives a package of 7 meals a week.

Olga is an 88 year old widow from Russia who lives with her elderly handicapped son. Olga is housebound as she suffers from heart disease and recently had a hip replacement operation. Olga receives a weekly package of 8 meals.

Shmuel, is an 80 year old widower who lives alone and finds it difficult to cook as he suffers from dizziness and chronic heart disease. He receives a weekly package of 7 meals.

Rachel and Akiva, are an elderly couple with severe health and financial problems. Akiva is wheelchair bound following a stroke and also suffers from heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. Rachel suffers from obesity and high blood pressure. Neither is able to work. In addition, because of his health condition, Akiva requires special dietary food. The couple receives 10 meals a week.

Simha is a 75 year old widow who suffers from Parkinson's disease and bad eyesight. After undergoing several falls, Simha was told it was dangerous to live on her own and she has now moved in with her daughter in Bet Yisrael. The daughter, however, has a large family and is unable to support her mother. Simha receives a package of 7 meals a week.

Anglo Retirees Tutoring Schoolchildren

Project Mesila places senior volunteers in elementary schools to provide individual assistance to Israeli schoolchildren struggling in their English studies.

Available this year in Bet Shemesh.

so relies on an abdominal feeding tube. Two weeks ago, his sons got a bill for their father's hospitalization - NIS 97 per day. They were going to pay, until they saw two large signs in the hospital's corridors thanking the Claims Commission for its generous donation for refurbishing the wards.

The Claims Commission is the body in charge of assets belonging to Jews from the former East Germany whose heirs have not been located. Each year, it donates some \$8 million to renovate internal medicine departments at hospitals with elderly patients.

"The Claims Conference donates money to the hospital, to the state, and they want NIS3,000 a month from my father, a Holocaust survivor who never received a cent from the state?" asked Itzhak Widder.

Shalom Widder is not the only survivor in this predicament. As Hartzfeld's management pointed out, the National Health Insurance Law requires a co-payment of NIS 97 per diem for long-term hospitalization. But recently, the Holocaust Survivors Welfare Fund has been fielding more and more requests from survivors' children who are having difficulty meeting hospital bills. Yesterday, the fund's director, Moshe Shechori, appealed to the Finance Ministry to let him help these survivors and their families. Shechori hopes that grants will be available in 2009.

Itzhak Widder's parents immigrated to Israel from Romania in 1964, thereby missing the eligibility deadline for receiving either reparations from Germany or a disability pension from the treasury. Like several thousand other survivors, they fell between the bureaucratic cracks, leaving them ineligible for any benefit until recently. Pursuant to a government decision last year, Shalom Widder began receiving a monthly stipend of NIS1,000 three months ago. (His wife died two years ago.) This, together with his old-age pension and income supplement from the National Insurance Institute, comes to a total of NIS2,200.

Itzhak Widder took the hospital bill to Avraham Pressler, the Claims Conference representative in Israel, who promised to help. Pressler applied to the hospital, but was informed that Widder is not entitled to a payment exemption, because his sons' income

[Click here to learn how you can become a Mesila volunteer.](#)

IN MEMORIAM



Our hearts go out to the family and friends of our fallen soldiers, Udi Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, z"l. May the memories of these two men forever be a blessing and may we merit as a nation to soon experience peace and happier times.

We hope that this e-zine will give you a window on life for seniors in Israel today.

Every month we will send you the latest news, together with profiles of veteran Israelis, reviews, articles

exceeds the exemption limit. Itzhak Widder, a disabled veteran, says his monthly income is NIS4,500. His brother is also disabled. They reported as much to the hospital and the Claims Conference. But they got a call this week from the hospital's billing department demanding payment and warning that legal steps would be taken otherwise.

and poetry written by or about seniors.

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"My father was deprived all these years. I served the

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Ezrat Avot is a non-profit organization that provides services, resources and education to enable Israel's elderly to age in the comfort and dignity of their own homes and communities.

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