

January 2012

Dear Friends,

**Around the middle of May 1981**, three families entered the first houses of Kfar Rafael, with their six children and a handful of co-workers. A few weeks later 17 villagers from Beit Eliahu moved in, and the earthly existence of our life-community practically began. The office was in a room in one of the family flats, the weavery and wood workshop in the two bomb-shelters, the bread was baked at home, a room in one of the houses was dedicated to the therapeutic class, and the laundry was washed in turns in the one commercial machine installed in a room in the other house. A lot of work was invested in land work around the houses as well as in orchard and garden, so as to create 'an oasis' wherein we can take root and grow. Not less effort was required to establish the right habits and rhythms needed for a therapeutic adults community and to support the villagers on the transition from youth to maturity. And, as the sail that carries it all forward with ever renewing and rejuvenation, the cultural life: the daily 'morning song', the evening activities, the Shabbat reception ('Kabalat Shabbat') and ending ('Havdala'), the seasonal festivals and celebrations around the year, study groups and introduction courses; not to mention the endless meetings about every detail of life...

**The first decade** may be characterized in intensive physical growth: workshops – the laundry, the bakery and the weavery – were built, the orchard, vegetable garden and the estate gardens and lawns established, the main circle of 9 houses completed and, for a short period in 1991-2, fully populated (!). In the **second decade**, more qualitative developments can be discerned: The cultural activities, office facilities and medical clinic received a decent home in the village hall, that offers additionally extra accommodation for long-term co-workers as well as a meetings and seminar room; an elaborated and fully equipped third workshop building for the food-processing, silk work and candle-making as well as the gift-shop was built; service facilities such as the garage and cool-room building, the wood workshop and the sports ground added; wind-breaking and shade-offering trees were planted within existing orchard and estate; home life as well as work and cultural activity received a more solid, established and balanced pace, with 7 stable house-communities housing around 50 villagers; and the 'Kfar Rafael' seminar for young co-workers as well as external students made its initial steps. The **third decade** brought the seeds of transformation, opening up, ending and renewal: a younger generation of families began to step in; a neighborhood of six houses was built for actively retired former houseparents; individual therapies – painting, music, eurhythmy, horse riding, massage and physiotherapy – developed; the 'villagers seminar' began side by side with the already established co-workers one. Older and frail villagers, partners for the road of many years, had sadly to leave to more suitable facilities, thus paving the way for younger ones to join in; and, last but not least: the Waldorf education initiative, 'Neta Erez', sprang up and grew from one kindergarten 10 years ago to 7 school classes and 4 kindergartens today!

#### So how was 2011 for us?

It began with the unique, heart-touching being of 'The Little Prince' and its creator, the writer and pilot Antoine de St. Exupéry. For the first time we took a modern creation and creator as theme for our 'winter activity', after many years of mythological, biblical and legendary themes. The voyage of this heavenly child from his little star with the moody Rose, through the various planets of imperfect one-sidednesses we all share, to the present earth wherein he can learn the wisdom of the heart, and can teach it to his friend before returning to his Rose, captured us all with its universal truthfulness. The unusual life-story of its creator inspired courage, steadfastness and solidarity for all humanity.

The spring brought us Alex, a new villager in Spielmann house that speaks fluent Russian, who joined us in April and quickly adjusted to the new way of life he met here. His warm and open person is a true contribution to our community.

On the first of May we parted from Chava (Eva) Levy, the widow of our first association treasurer, the late Michael Levy, who had crossed the threshold 13 years ago. Chava and Michael stood at the cradle of 'Beit Eliahu' from the very beginning, supported us faithfully throughout the early years of struggle in the desert, and shall surely continue the work with renewed joint forces henceforth!

In the middle of May, exactly on our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a group of villagers - former pupils of the founder and matron of 'Beit Eliahu', Ms. Ruth Mosimann - entered her house in Port, canton Bern, Switzerland. The visit was a dream that came true for both sides, and the whole Swiss holiday of the group was very successful!

In June, months of mountainous work came to completion and the Be'er Sheva Waldorf school moved to its spacious new site, wherein it can continue to grow and develop up to class 9. Parallel to that, the work on the future secondary school continues, and the seminar for Waldorf education matures in its second year. The Waldorf initiative is still in need of substantial donations!

The 'tectonic' movements continued throughout the summer, when the former co-workers flat of Mader house was renovated and became the home of family Spielmann, the houseparents; Gal and Anva Levy, co-houseparents in Joel house, moved (again!) to the new neighborhood, thus making space for Keren and Morvan Shalem, former co-houseparents in Mader house, to move in and prepare to take over the Talker house from Christine, who stepped down from houseparentship and can dedicate now more time to workshop, therapy, seminar teaching and staff correspondence.

The autumn saw us strengthening the new connection with the large manufacturing company of 'Chemicals for Israel', who foster us in direct project financing as well as in voluntary work of professionals and in supporting our efforts to improve and 'engreen' our energy system. We hope to tell you more about this long-term connection next year.

Finally, in mid-winter, we invited all our voluntary professionals from outside – the carpenter, the maintenance man, the horse-breaker, the Hebrew teacher, as well as the long-term employees - with their families to a Hanukkah celebration in the village hall; several villagers played Hanukkah tunes on their instruments, each volunteer was addressed and thanked for his/her contribution, the carpenter - a religious man - blessed and lighted the candles, and we sang. It was a heart-warming occasion, in which we could extend our gratitude also to all those who support us from far and beyond!

Warm greetings for 2012 from us all!