



# Elah

## Annual Report 2016

We are proud to present the annual report of Elah Center for Coping with Loss. During the report year we have continued our efforts towards providing tailored psychosocial assistance to each individual or community in need, especially to those coping with loss and grief. We have developed and undertaken a variety of activities to support our clients, increase their well-being and social integration, with the aim to contribute to a stronger society. In 2016 almost 5,000 people received more than 55,000 hours of services.

This report includes Elah's work for the Israeli community in general and the Dutch community in particular, as well as the activities of the Help Centers for families of homicide victims.

### Letter from the Chairman

In 1979 the founders of Elah assumed that the organizations' services would only be necessary for a limited amount of years, but the number of people in need of our assistance is still growing. In 2016 an increase of 22% was registered in the number of clients and a rise of 45% in the hours of received services.

The growth is evident in the field of aid to people who are affected by loss and mourning, such as relatives of murder victims, and families who have lost a child to a disease, but it is most distinct in the field of assistance to Holocaust survivors. Since time matters for the elderly survivors, we have deliberately invested in this target group in the past year. Elah has employed four regional managers who built a team of about seventy freelance therapists, enabling us to instantly respond to Holocaust survivors' requests for help, nation-wide. This resulted in an increasing amount of home-visits, group work, lectures and workshops.

The assistance to Holocaust survivors is financed to a large extent by the Israeli Ministry of Finance, through the Holocaust Survivors Rights Authority. The services to survivors who are not eligible for subsidy from the ministry are financed through gifts from donors and foundations.

A slight increase in numbers was also registered among other target populations such as the Dutch community and people dealing with issues not related to loss and bereavement. Moreover, we have expanded our service package with a new kind of treatment: "spiritual guidance". You can read about this treatment later on in the report.

After many years of close cooperation, colleagues Herman Bron, Tamar Hirshensohn and Sharon Parnes have left Elah. Each of them has made important contributions to the organization in his or her area. We wish them good luck in their new careers.

I would like to thank all those who enable Elah to perform all its tasks: the board members, who voluntarily invest their time and efforts in our mission; Yaela Cohen and Bennie Leezer, who successfully manage the organization as a team; the staff members, who distinguish themselves by their enormous professionalism, creativity and enthusiasm. A heartfelt thank you is also due to our volunteers, as well as to the private donors, the foundations and public institutions that finance our work. Their support enables us to do our blessed work.

**Yahel Shachar**, Chair of the Board



## Tailored Psychosocial Support

Over the years, Elah has developed a wide range of therapeutic and social activities, which can be utilized separately or combined for the benefit of individuals and groups.



One of the social groups on a trip to the north

### Therapy

Everyone experiences losses in life: the death of a loved one, divorce, resignation, children leaving home, loss of physical functions, loss of status etc. In all these cases, Elah can offer assistance. Psychotherapy is suitable for people of all ages and backgrounds.

The therapist helps the client to understand problems, to cope with painful feelings and address difficult situations, with the ultimate aim of improving the quality of life. Therapy may be short- or long-term, individual, with a partner or with other members of the family, it may take place in one of the clinics of Elah or at the client's home. To ensure the quality of the therapy, Elah's therapists take part in extension courses, and in individual and group supervision. Elah aims to give therapy at reduced rates to those who cannot afford it, with the help of grants from donors and foundations (the "Elah for Everyone Fund").

### Psychiatric Consultation

Elah employs a psychiatrist to whom clients can be referred for advice on medication for mental health problems.

### Group Therapy

In the course of years Elah has developed different types of group therapy. Some groups are conventional therapeutic discussion groups, while others use different media such as writing, literature or drama to encourage discussion of personal topics.

### Elah's Target Populations

Elah Center for Coping with Loss provides services to the general population, with an emphasis on the following target groups: Holocaust survivors, relatives of murder victims, the Dutch community in Israel, families who have lost loved ones in Israeli wars or terrorist attacks, people who have lost family members to illness, and people who are suffering from trauma and crisis, and are in need of mental support. Elah is an official supplier of psychosocial care of the Ministries of Finance, Welfare, Defense, and Foreign Affairs as well as of the Open University.

### Community Work

The purpose of community work is to promote the social integration of the individual in the community. Elah's community work comprises socio-cultural group meetings, intergenerational groups, volunteer projects, lectures and workshops. The group activities are largely carried out by volunteers, who operate under professional supervision of Elah's social workers.

### Ceremonies, Events and Special Projects

Elah organizes ceremonies and events for the Dutch community and other target populations. In addition we carry out projects for other organizations and government agencies, and train external volunteers and professionals.



## Projects for the General Public

In 2016 more than 2,800 people in Israel received a total amount of over 32,000 hours of psychosocial assistance.



### Lectures for Holocaust Survivors and the Elderly

Elah's therapists give lectures and workshops for the elderly and Holocaust survivors on subjects like dreams, humor, anger management, secrets in our lives, discrimination and prejudice, grandparenting in modern times, etc. At the invitation of the welfare departments of several municipalities, Elah presented 73 lectures and workshops for more than 500 elderly, who received a total of more than 3,000 hours of service.

### Groups for Holocaust Survivors and the Elderly

Elah has developed a diverse range of groups for Holocaust survivors and the elderly. In these groups we discuss existential questions and try to evoke memories in a creative manner, for example through drama, songs, photos or recipes. At the invitation of municipalities, homes for the elderly, day-care centers and clubs, Elah has led 83 discussion groups in 44 different cities during the report year. Twenty of the groups were for Russian-speaking survivors. In total more than 1,000 survivors received more than 11,000 hours of group activity.



### Therapy

In 2016 more than 900 clients received individual, couple or family therapy, either in one of Elah's clinics or at the client's home.

About 700 of these clients are first-generation Holocaust survivors who usually receive therapy at home due to limited mobility. Nearly 20% of the survivors are from the former Soviet Union.

As our Chair states in the introduction, Elah has deliberately invested in the treatment of Holocaust survivors by employing four regional managers who built a team of about seventy freelance therapists, enabling us to quickly respond to Holocaust survivors' requests for help, nation-wide. Since 2011, aid to Holocaust survivors is financed to a large extent by the Israeli Ministry of Finance, through the Holocaust Survivors Rights Authority. The services for survivors who are not eligible for state support are financed through gifts from donors and foundations (The Elah for Everyone Fund).

This is also the case for our other target groups. Elah receives many requests from NPO's that render services to vulnerable populations to provide subsidized therapeutic support to their clients. We try to accommodate whenever our financial means allow it.

In the report year we were able to treat young adults in alternative military service (Bnei Sherut Leumi), people with disabilities (in cooperation with the Municipal Employment Center), and Israeli lone soldiers (in cooperation with the Michael Levin Center for Lone Soldiers). In cooperation with the NPO Kamim, we assisted families who have lost a child to disease.

### Intergenerational writing groups

Promoting intergenerational relationships has always been one of our goals. That is why, starting from 2008, Elah has organized intergenerational writing groups, in which elderly people (mainly Holocaust survivors) and high school students meet to carry out writing exercises, and read and discuss their texts.

All twelve meetings evolve around themes to which both young and old can relate, like first love, family, friendship, dreams or ambitions. These groups contribute greatly to bridging the so-called "generation gap". They provide the young with historical insight and an understanding of what it means to be elderly, while the older people get a closer look into the world of the young. In the end, participants often reach the conclusion that there is little difference between old and young, and that each person ultimately lives with the same fears, mistakes and successes.

In 2016, our therapists facilitated 4 intergenerational writing groups.

## Help Centers for Families of Murder Victims – The Sneh Program

In the report year, 1838 members of 615 families received support through the help centers.



The annual memorial ceremony is attended by families from different backgrounds and religions, who share the same traumatic experience



### Spiritual guidance

A new three-year project was launched under the name "A place to breathe". Its goal is to provide family members of victims of homicide, suicide or road accidents an alternative form of assistance: spiritual guidance.

The underlying idea of spiritual guidance is that people who are coping with difficulties often feel the need to get in touch with a "inner mental space" in which they can find meaning, hope and healing. The task of the spiritual counselor is to help search for this personal space, and to accommodate interaction with the innermost feelings and hidden mysteries of the client's soul. Tailored to the client's wishes, the counselor can use instruments ranging from text and poems to breathing exercises.

The project was initiated by the department of the Ministry of Welfare dedicated to relatives of victims of homicide, suicide and road accidents, and JDC's Ashalim department for at-risk youth and their families. Elah will execute the project. Since the establishment of the project by the end of 2016, eight clients have received spiritual guidance.

### Support and Therapy

Since July 2012 Elah coordinates help centers for close relatives of homicide victims. The loss of a family member as a result of crime is an extremely traumatic experience. To process the experience, relatives are offered psychological and legal counseling through the centers. The Israeli Ministry of Welfare has initiated the project and is responsible for financing and supervision, while the coordination of the aid (including individual therapy and support groups) falls under the responsibility of the managers of the centers, who are staff members of Elah. Centers are situated in Tel Aviv, Beersheba, Jerusalem, Haifa, Kfar Kana and Tira. In total 615 families were assisted in 2016. In addition, 224 family members received individual therapy, and 131 people took part in 13 support groups across the country.

Elah trained lawyers who assist the relatives of victims in the Sneh program, and participated in the "Forum for Loss in Israel", along with representatives of other organizations and government agencies.

### Memorial Ceremony "No One Will Be Forgotten"

In December 2016 Elah organized for the fourth time an annual memorial ceremony for murder victims, in collaboration with the Families of Murder Victims Association, the Israeli Ministries of Welfare and Justice, and the police. Families from all walks of Israeli society were present at the ceremony. Seven families lit a memorial candle and shared their story with the audience. Subsequently, participants were given the opportunity to name the names of their murdered loved ones out loud. The families feel greatly supported by this yearly meeting. They hope the ceremony will break the collective silence around homicide and stir public interest. The ceremony took place at the Tel Aviv Convention Center with about 400 participants.

### New Clinic in Tira

In May 2016, we opened a new help center in Tira to improve the assistance to family members of homicide victims in the eastern Sharon area, where formerly we lacked suitable accommodation. Clients, deputies of the Ministry of Welfare and members of the police corps participated in the opening ceremony. The help center is managed and funded by Elah, and supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs.



## Projects for the Dutch Community

In 2016 about 1,200 people of Dutch descent in Israel received over 16,500 hours of service.



### Shoah Memorial Ceremony

As an organization established by and for Holocaust survivors, Elah devotes special attention to the annual Holocaust remembrance ceremony, which is attended by hundreds of survivors and their families. This year the ceremony's theme was "The Bittersweet Taste of Freedom". Many Jews who survived the camps or went into hiding, experienced the liberation with ambivalent feelings. They had lost family members and had no home or community to return to. They faced the painful task of picking up the pieces of their lives in an environment that wished to forget the war as soon as possible. Sometimes they faced anti-Semitism and a slow-working system of reparations, which failed to understand the extent of the disaster that had befallen the Jewish community.

Traditionally, six survivors lit a memorial candle during the ceremony, and told the audience about their experiences after the liberation.

After the ceremony, the movie "Woman in Gold" by Simon Curtis was screened, which tells the true story of Maria Altmann, an Austrian Holocaust survivor who fought for years to retrieve the works of art that had been stolen from her family during the Second World War.

This year, two ceremonies took place, one in Beth Chel Ha'avir in Herzliya and one in Beth Joles in Haifa, with a total of about 430 participants.

### Therapy and Psychiatric Consultation

In 2016 almost 300 men and women of Dutch descent received subsidized individual, couple and family therapy or psychiatric help from Dutch speaking therapists. Among the clients were Holocaust survivors, men and women of the "second generation", partners and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, and clients without war-related issues.

### Group Therapy

In the report year, the Dutch community enjoyed therapeutic writing groups, film groups, a group for child survivors and a bibliotherapy group.

### Social-Cultural Groups

Elah's community workers facilitate age-related groups for people with similar cultural backgrounds, in cooperation with volunteers. The meetings enable the participants to undertake activities with peers and build up social networks. In 2016, nine social-cultural groups for the Dutch community were active nation-wide. Five groups were organized in collaboration with the Dutch Immigrant Organization (Irgun Olei Holland). A total of 200 people participated in the groups.

### Volunteer Work

Elah is supported by more than 100 volunteers. These volunteers fulfill social, organizational and practical tasks within the organization and the community. Some volunteers visit the sick and elderly, others assist in the facilitation of social-cultural groups. There are also volunteers who manage mobile libraries with Dutch books, or drive elderly participants to group meetings. All volunteers receive individual and group counseling. They attend lectures about the different aspects of volunteer work, and discuss their work experiences with the designated social worker. In 2016, Elah volunteers received approximately 900 hours of counseling by social workers.

### Activities of "Friends of Elah" in the Netherlands

Obtaining funding is one of Elah's permanent concerns. Through the "Friends of Elah in the Netherlands" (STEN) organization, we have undertaken various activities to keep in touch with private donors and foundations. We sent digital newsletters, published articles in Jewish media in the Netherlands, and, with the help of volunteers, arranged information tables at relevant conferences. Moreover, we gave lectures to groups of tourists who come to Israel from the Netherlands.

The highlight of the fundraising activities was a charity event at the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. Over forty people, including the current and previous Mayor of Amsterdam and other distinguished guests, assembled to hear about the wellbeing of Holocaust survivors today and the services Elah provides for them.

Central to the program was the presentation of the painter Sam Drukker. As the son of a Jewish father, Drukker wondered which traces the war left in his father's life. This question prompted him portray ten Dutch-Jewish men who, like his father, survived the Holocaust as adults. The result, the exposition "Minje", is intended as a tribute to a generation who had to pick up the broken pieces after the war and persevere for the next generation.

## Knowledge Sharing

In 2016 Elah provided training to about 400 colleagues, students and volunteers from other organizations.



Meeting with colleagues from similar organizations

### Knowledge Sharing

Because of Elah's expertise in treating Holocaust survivors and others who cope with loss and grief, we are often invited to train volunteers and social workers from municipal and other institutions that work with similar target groups. In addition, Elah is regularly asked to present its knowledge and experience at professional conferences. In 2016 Elah provided training to about 400 colleagues, students and volunteers from other organizations.

### Student Supervision

Since 2014 Elah has been recognized as training institution for BA and MA students of social work from Tel Aviv University. In 2016, Elah supervised four students.

### Publications and Research

With the help of Peer Levin Communications we published various articles in the media and gave a number of interviews on the various issues that concern our target populations. In addition, we published 3 booklets with life stories from Holocaust survivors, a monthly digital newsletter (in Dutch and Hebrew), and information about our services in media and at information fairs. Due to the sale of ads, we were able to publish the Elah calendar.

### Conferences

In 2016 Elah staff members presented insights and therapeutic models at six professional conferences.

### Conference on Loss and Bereavement

In January 2016 the second "International Conference on Loss, Bereavement and Human Resilience in Israel and in the World" took place in Eilat. The purpose of the conference is to gain insights from scientific research, and to exchange knowledge and experience. In Israel, where many families cope with loss due to the security situation and the Holocaust, a lot of fieldwork and research has been done on the subject.

One of the keynote speakers was Robert Neimeyer of the University of Memphis, who developed the "theory of loss and reconstruction of meaning". Neimeyer presents mourning as a process of reconstruction. According to his theory, people need to search for a new purpose and new meaning in their lives after a profound loss. Elah organized the conference together with the International Center for Loss, Bereavement and Human Resilience, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Defense, National Insurance Institute, Jad HaNiktafiem and the Academic Colleges Or Yehuda and Safed.



### Finances in NIS

Operating Turnover	12,461,494
Total Cost Activities	(13,417,490)
Net Cost	(42,243)
Net Result	(998,239)

## Thanks to our donors

(in alphabetical order)

- The Arkin Family Foundation
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- The Fritz Naftali Foundation
- Narkis Street Baptist Congregation
- VEG Oldebroek
- And many other donors from the Netherlands and Israel

**With special thanks to our dedicated and loyal volunteers**

## Help Elah, support our projects

Elah is a non-profit organization dependent on donations from individuals and foundations. You can support our work by donating to the “**Elah for Everyone Fund**”. The purpose of this fund is to provide psychotherapy to people without adequate financial resources. The cost of one session is \$ 80 (therapy at home \$ 100) while you guarantee half a year of therapy for \$ 1,600 (therapy at home \$ 2,000).

Elah is recognized by the Israeli and Dutch tax authorities as a non-profit for tax refundable donations. Tax refundable donations from the USA can be made through the PEF.

## How can you donate?

### Tax deductible donations from the U.S.A

PE.F. Israel Endowment Funds, Inc.

630 Third Ave. Ste. 1501  
New York, NY10017, USA

<http://www.pefisrael.org/>

Make your donation check payable to Elah-center for psycho-social support, Registered Association Number 580040947

### By credit card

Visit our website ([www.elah.org.il](http://www.elah.org.il)), press the “donate now” button and enter your details or call the Elah office at +972-3-6910921

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## About ELAH

Elah Center for Coping with Loss is a professional organization that provides psychosocial assistance to the entire population. Everyone experiences loss in life: the death of a loved one, divorce, resignation, children leaving home, loss of physical functions, loss of status etc. In all of these situations, Elah can offer assistance. Elah was founded in 1979 by and for immigrants from the Netherlands and was the first organization in Israel to provide psychosocial assistance to Holocaust survivors. Over the years, we have expanded our field of work and helped thousands of people who suffered loss, mourning, trauma or personal difficulties through individual or group therapy, psychiatric counseling and a wide variety of social activities.

Elah has six branches throughout the country and works with a growing team of certified therapists who are familiar with different treatment methods and specialize in the treatment of people who have suffered loss or crisis. Sensitivity, confidentiality and professionalism characterize the work of our therapists.

Elah aims to give therapy at reduced rates to those who cannot afford it, with the help of grants from donors and foundations (the “Elah for Everyone Fund”).

Elah cooperates with a large number of governmental bodies and NPO’s and is awarded the yearly certificate of proper management (nihul takin).

### Elah – Center for Psycho-Social Support of Former Dutch Residents and their Relatives

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