

LEGITIMIZING AFTER-CARE FOR INSTITUTIONALIZED ADULT OFFENDERS IN ISRAEL

by LESTER D. JAFFE ET AL

Introduction

ISRAEL is one of the few Western-oriented countries which does not have a government after-care program for discharged prisoners. While Israeli prison officials, welfare personnel and criminologists press for the initiation of such service, the only formal body active in the after-care field is a voluntary group (The Society for Rehabilitation of Prisoners) which, at best, provides limited help to a small number of offenders with "good risk" prognosis.

The vast percentage of discharged prisoners in Israel leave prison as alone with their feelings as when they entered: the problems of the past still to be sorted out and waiting ahead, the test of transition from prison to free society. For most discharges the task is

*The Authors: Dr. Lester D. Jaffe is a Research and Teaching Fellow at the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and the Institute of Criminology, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Mr. Tsvi Givati is the Warden of Tel Mond Prison, The Israel Prison Service. Mrs. Chava Lehman and Mr. Yitochak Bakal are social workers on the social service staff of the Israel Prison Service. Mrs. Lehman and Mr. Bakal contributed the case material presented in this paper. The authors wish to express their appreciation to members of the Israel Prison Service team and particularly to Miss Victoria Nissim, Director of Prison Social Service, whose work we wish to acknowledge in this report.

too great and in recent years over 44% return within the first year out of prison. In eight years, from 1951 the rate of recidivism had almost doubled. Despite the well-established fact¹ that an offender can be supervised outside prison several times more cheaply and more satisfactorily than he can be cared for in prison, governmental authorities remain content with a limited volunteer program.

Regardless of the lack of support from the national legislature, members of the Israel Prison Service have reached out by professional instinct beyond their formal mandate of providing services to prisoners and their families, and in a number of cases have provided follow-up care to ex-prisoners on an independent basis. This follow-up care has principally been carried on by social workers who have developed a meaningful relationship with offenders under their care while still in prison. These workers, by pre-release plan continued to be on hand during the crises which in every case followed the prisoners' release. The important point here is that such follow-up care by prison social workers is clearly necessitated by the gap in existing services. However, it has

¹ 15th Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Board of Parole, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Board of Parole, 1958, pp. 22.

no formal or legal recognition by either the Israel Prison Service, the Ministry of Police (to which the Prison Service belongs), or any other governmental body.

This paper is presented as a document for legitimizing prison after-care services on a national governmental basis. Several case examples of after-care work from the records of prison social workers are presented below to illustrate the tasks, problems and potential of rehabilitation as a result of this service. Following the case summaries a brief review of concrete proposals are presented as models for an after-care program for Israeli offenders.

The Case of Eli

Eli is 27 years old and was born in Israel. He was sentenced to ten years imprisonment for robbery; with him, his eldest brother was sentenced for the same crime.

Life History

Eli was born in the Mea Shearim section of Jerusalem of ultra-orthodox religious parents. His father was married for the first time in the United States and had seven children from this marriage. He deserted his wife and children, came to Israel, married his second wife and with her had three sons. Eli was the youngest of them. The economic situation was tight most of the time because the head of the family did not work but they managed to live on the limited income of family property. Tension between the parents was great and conflicts frequent. The children grew up in neglect and the type of education they received from their father was based primarily on severe punishment and bodily injury. The mother was a weak, passive woman and afraid of her husband.

Eli and his eldest brother began to steal from the earliest childhood. His father handed Eli over to the police of the Palestine Mandatory Government who put him into an institution for young offenders. He was eight years old at this time. From this time on the boy was pushed about from institution to institution and was only at home for short periods of time. He was early influenced by grown-up criminals and learnt the ways of crime.

During the Israel War of Independence, his father was killed by a shell and his mother committed suicide soon after. After spending a spell in prison at about the same time, Eli later committed a robbery and was sentenced to ten years. He was 20 years old.

Plans for Rehabilitation

We got to know Eli as a bitter young man full of suspicion and opposition to society. He isolated himself and was not prepared to talk to us or to express his feelings. Repeated attempts to get him to establish contact with his social worker failed. Eli began to suffer from various pains and the doctor found that he had a stomach ulcer. Because of his health he was excused from work and spent most of the time concentrating on himself and his sickness. The medical orderly who looked after him succeeded in making him turn to the social worker for material help and at the very beginning of his stay in prison the young man agreed to enter a carpentry course. As the years went by he became attached to the social worker and his physical and emotional condition improved. He began to learn to work steadily and also to believe in those who wanted to help him, but all traces of his suspicion did not disappear until the end of his imprisonment and until it was proved to him that the help we were giving him was genuine.

Taking into consideration that this young man was alone in the country and the fact that his brother, imprisoned in Ramla (Israel's maximum security prison) was a negative influence on him, we put him in touch with a volunteer family in the neighborhood of Natanya who began to visit him and invite him for holidays; a positive attachment between them developed. This family requested and with the help of the prison staff obtained for him an amnesty.

The Period After Release

Eli was set up working as a carpenter in Natanya. He lived in a furnished room and remained in close touch with his "adoptive" family and with the prison social worker. Immediately after his release his ulcer symptoms became worse and Eli claimed that he was not capable of leading an independent life. Sometimes he longed to be back in prison and he suffered from the fact that the speed of his work fell short of that of the other workers and he felt himself lacking in success and efficiency.

Eli asked our help to get him work in a residential medical institution in Natanya where conditions were regulated and to a degree like those in prison. While in principle we opposed this, we nevertheless helped him enter the institution. Also in the institution his adjustment was slow, but he felt more relaxed and his health improved. His attachment to the adoptive family remained close, took the place of the undesirable contact with his brother, and gave him support and encouragement. Eli sought security by accumulating the money he earned and saving gave him great satisfaction. Also, in his place of work he had a feeling of success and at the same time he began making plans for his future and thinking of further education both practical and general.

He suffered a crisis when the police came to look for him one day at his place of work because of suspicions of him and to check out his involvement in a crime. On account of this incident many people got to know of his past.

Again at this time his ties with the adoptive family helped and encouraged him. His on-going contact and support from the prison social worker also helped him over this crisis.

Meanwhile the brother continued to get involved in new crimes after his release from Ramla and he turned to Eli to ask for help. Eli stood up to this test by not becoming illegally involved and proved his maturity despite the influence of his brother.

After a year and a half Eli asked us to help him change his place of work. He wanted to get out of the protected framework and to be more independent and also to progress in his work. He was accepted by a *Kupat Cholim* (Workers' Sick Fund) medical institution on better conditions and with opportunities for further education. This time he secured living quarters apart from his place of work. Eli had lately begun to think in terms of a family and of settling down permanently. Eli's physical appearance has changed for the good in these last years and he is decidedly more secure. He has a positive purpose in life, feels that he belongs to an orderly society and is interested in what goes on in the country over and above his own particular situation. We remember his reaction the day he began to pay income tax and his pride in it.

Today we see Eli as a young man who has been rehabilitated and it seems to us that only exceptional adverse conditions could

cause him to fall again. He has passed many obstacles and stood the test.

The Case of Nathan

Nathan was sent to prison at the age of nineteen with a sentence of two years and ten months. He had been found guilty of house-breaking and theft. This was the third time he had been sent to prison; the two previous occasions had been for short periods, one of four months and the other of six months. He had 50 previous convictions and a background of vagrancy, pickpocketing, theft, running away from institutions, house-breaking and robbery.

Life History

Nathan was born in a small town in Persia. His father came from Caucasasia (Russia) and his mother was of Persian origin. The mother was married when she was eighteen years old. She is described as a good-hearted woman who loved her children, but she was constantly sick and it was difficult for her to look after them. She died after the birth of Nathan's little sister. Nathan was then three years old. The death of their mother left the children without proper care for more than a year. They followed their father to work during the day or roamed about in the streets.

When Nathan was five, his father married again. The stepmother turned out to be an aggressive and dictatorial woman who behaved badly to the step-children and often beat Nathan who did not want to obey her. At the age of five Nathan was sent to school, but he often ran away. There were also quarrels at home and he began to wander about in the streets. The only positive relationship which Nathan had during this period was with his father who sometimes protected him from his step-mother; but, nevertheless, he was not stable in his behavior towards his son, and when he was angry, used to beat him cruelly.

At the age of eight Nathan began working on his own initiative selling newspapers, hawking or shining shoes. In his work he wanted to be liked by the customers and tried hard to make a good impression in order to gain more money for his labour.

The birth of step-brothers made more difficulties for Nathan who was overtly jealous of them and sometimes used to run away from home for a few days. Together with run-

ning away, he began to steal money from his father who stopped being interested in him altogether after the new sons were born.

Until this time the family lived in Persia, but in 1949 after the Israel-Arab War the family came to Israel when Nathan was twelve years old. The family, consisting of nine people, lived in a small hut of one room where they still live to this day. Overcrowding and economic difficulties increased the jealousy between the brothers and increased Nathan's feeling of being discriminated against. An attempt was made by the family to put him into a boarding school, but he was taken out a short time later because of his thieving there. He was thrown out of the house by his step-mother and from then on started the period of Nathan's wandering. He again began his old work of shining shoes and selling newspapers. Contact with home was almost broken off and took the form of perpetual quarrels.

He was thirteen when he was first caught stealing by the police and put into the Mevlah Institution (an observation and diagnostic center for delinquents) but from there, and afterwards from other juvenile institutions, he kept on running away. He was always in revolt, rebellious towards the directors of the institutions and he formed no attachments to staff members. He tried to make a good impression by a slick appearance, but behind the scenes he organized boys younger than himself and they ran away together from the institutions and committed new crimes.

In the light of this situation, the Juvenile Court judge decided to send him to a prison for young adult offenders. He was fifteen and a half years old when he was sentenced for the first time to a prison for adults. In Israel persons 18 years of age are considered adults.² He was put into the youth wing of Ramla prison for a period of four months. The purpose of the judge was to warn him, but Nathan knew from past experience how to make a good impression and how to behave properly in order to gain a reduction of one-third of the sentence (i.e. a "good-behavior" system). Behind the scenes he continued to form new plans for house-breaking and theft.

² David Reifen, *The Implications of Laws and Procedures in the Juvenile Court in Israel* (mimeo.)

Division of Research and Planning, Ministry of Social Welfare, Jerusalem, (January 1960), p. 12.

However, after a brief period of freedom, he was caught again and this time got six months imprisonment. During these short periods there was no time for any intensive treatment. He was highly suspicious and opposed any contact with those trying to take an interest in him.

When he came out of prison this time Nathan was seventeen and a half years old. He then met a girl of seventeen who came from Iraq and after a short time he married her. During this period he made serious attempts to overcome his problems and return to a better way of living. He began to work selling sweet corn from a street stand and even undertook heavy work as a steel worker. This situation did not continue long because clashes with his wife began. Nathan loved his wife and sought in her warmth, patience and stability—the things which he lacked, but the truth of the matter was that his wife, as we got to know her, was a childish girl, lacking in maturity, full of complexes about her ethnic origin (Iraqi) and wanting to be a modern girl, acceptable by Western social standards.

What increased even more the tension between them was Nathan's young sister. She was attached to Nathan in an unhealthy way; she was dictatorial and interfered in his married life. After about a year all of these strains led to divorce. It was not long, however, before the neurotic relationship between Nathan and his wife was renewed and they were married again. Nathan did not have steady work at this time. His wife became pregnant. He did not want the child and begged her to have an abortion. She opposed this. Soon afterwards he got caught in an attempt at house-breaking and armed robbery and was sent to prison. A month after his sentence began, his wife gave birth to a son.

Treatment During Imprisonment and Plans for Rehabilitation

Nathan's real problems were brought to light during this last and longest imprisonment. He felt guilty about his wife and new-born son. This was the reason for his tension in prison and an early attempt to escape.

At first the casework treatment was with Nathan's wife. One purpose was to assure her a roof over her head and then to get her out of the difficulties in which she found herself due to Nathan's imprisonment and the birth of the child. With the cooperation of the local Welfare Office and with the help

of the Society for the Rehabilitation of Prisoners and the Jewish Agency, housing was obtained. This took a great deal of arranging and also five months' time. Concurrently, we had talks with the wife and then with Nathan—the purpose being to support the wife, to bring her to a sense of responsibility towards her son and to prevent her from slipping into undesirable solutions to her unhappiness. In all these stages we enlisted by plan the cooperation of Nathan who began to show trust in us which, at a later stage, made possible a more intensive treatment of his own problems. He now began to cooperate in all of our work, both regarding his wife and himself, and in addition started to think seriously about training to be a tailor. All this was achieved by team work and the closest cooperation on the part of those taking care of him in prison—the director, the educational instructor, the vocational instructor, the warden and the social worker.

Four months before his release, Nathan was sent to the government Employment Office in Tel Aviv to take an examination in tailoring. He passed with the highest marks and was promised by the secretary of the office that work would be found for him on his release. In addition, Nathan had received 24 hours leave of absence when he got his "shikna" (public housing) so that he could be present with his family on the occasion of their entering their new home. Nathan reacted very positively to the fact that he was trusted in this way. In his opinion, this contributed greatly to his progress.

The housing Nathan was given was in Holon, a semi-urban area, the purpose being to remove him from his former surroundings. Also, it was near his place of work.

The Period After Release

Two factors helped us decide to continue our contact with Nathan after his release:

- (1) The very positive relations he had with all those who cared for him in prison.
- (2) The fact that he had not yet sufficiently surmounted his personal and family problems to move back into the community on his own.

Nathan was released on 2/11/59 after 22 months in prison and after having served two-thirds of his sentence. Already in the first week a terrible quarrel broke out between him and his wife. This was because it turned out that his wife had been unfaithful to him during his imprisonment. The wife conse-

quently left home for over a month and went to her parents, leaving her son in Nathan's care. With our help the child was placed with a woman neighbor on a paying basis and then it was possible for Nathan to go out to work.

For a month and a half Nathan appeared to be very unstable in his work. He drifted from one place of work to the other. He was impulsive and aggressive towards his wife. In addition he was very sensitive about the police and felt that they were pursuing him. During this period we saw him once a week and sometimes even twice a week. We encouraged him and had to help him out of the despair which overwhelmed him. His ongoing contact with us gave him much encouragement. At our intervention he agreed to the return of his wife. He even understood that he too was guilty to some extent for her unfaithfulness when she was left alone to face life. He was also capable of understanding that she had many problems of her own and was not able to stand up to difficulties which would have been hard for even the strongest persons.

The second year after discharge, from January 1960 to September 1960, was a stable one. During this time the relations between Nathan and his wife were good. He took good care of her and of his son. Despite this relative tranquility we saw him once a month. He worked as a tailor and made progress in his place of work. In our talks, he repeatedly said that he was happy and glad that he was "going straight."

It must be noted that during the period when Nathan progressed so well in his treatment, his wife remained a childish girl, impulsive and emotionally immature. Several times quarrels broke out between them over the child's education or over the fact that she continued to see men she knew during his prison time.

The matter reached the point of explosion in December, 1960. Nathan found out that his wife was having relations with a young man she knew while he was in prison. This brought on a violent quarrel and finally, separation. This was an extremely difficult crisis for him. He left his work, roamed the streets and even sometimes got drunk as he put it, "to forget his troubles." But he did not return to his old criminal activities. In February 1961 he drove a car without a license and was involved in a slight traffic accident. He was summoned to court and this woke him up. He realized that he was slipping

downfall and in the spirit of his early contacts with us in prison he came to ask our help. We appeared in court and asked the judge to take his situation into consideration and not to send him to prison. It must be noted that this was the first time Nathan had stood before a judge and pleaded guilty and said that he deserved punishment. He was fined.

In March, 1961 he divorced his wife. We supported him in this step when we became convinced that there was no other way out. The child stays with the mother and continues to visit him on a permanent basis.

Four months ago Nathan met a girl of eighteen, the daughter of members of an agricultural settlement. There is a strong attachment between them. He told her about his situation and about his past. At first her parents opposed the relationship, but he is making efforts to secure their agreement and it appears that they are inclined to consent. Today, Nathan's contact with us is by plan not on a regular basis, but depends on his initiative. What is more important, he knows the door is open.

Recapitulation

The common denominator of the two youths described above is their rich criminal past, their need of therapeutic help and their ability to use this help when extended to them in a realistic follow-up program by prison social workers. With the planned cooperation of all those taking care of them in prison, beginning with the medical orderly, the disciplinary officer, the vocational and education instructors and the social worker, contact was made with the subjects. The personnel working with them were put to the most severe tests when the young men, having no faith in these representatives of society, made repeated attempts at provocation; however, these incidents decreased during the course of treatment. The closed society of the prison framework, the constant educational supervision, the treatment by the social worker, both individual and general—all of these things changed the attitude of the subject,

created or increased his sense of security and precipitated his self-evaluation. The acquisition of an occupation was a tool of rehabilitation of the greatest importance. Also, the closed group life built up in the young men new conceptions of interdependency both socially and vocationally.

The last days before release brought, in most cases, a change of behaviour. The young men became aggressive and nervous. Fear of the future caused them to lose their sense of balance.

In the cases noted above, social workers of the institution continued to follow up the treatment of the released man after an expression showing that he wanted it. In the cases presented we saw that unless there was a close follow-up and the most intensive interest in them, the young men would have been very quickly back in prison. Nathan failed before a week had passed when he found that his wife had been unfaithful to him; Eli, a few days after he had begun work as a carpenter, overheard an unfavorable conversation about him between two workers and immediately reacted with an attack of "ulcers," and from then on did not want to work at carpentry any more. In both these cases the social workers and the resource agencies had to work very hard to prevent complete collapse which would have led to a return to crime. Even today, after periods of a year and a half and two years, both young men need a person outside of the prison with whom they can consult about their problems.

Our work with offenders both during and after their stay in prison has convinced us of several basic facts about rehabilitation planning:

- (1) There is no value in the work done inside the prison walls in protected and artificial conditions unless it is continued for a period outside during the time the re-

leased man really meets problems. There are no specific problems that we can anticipate in the prison framework, but we can attempt to help him face real life situations as they come.

- (2) At the time a man is released from the protected framework of prison he generally experiences a setback. To make matters worse, at this same time he needs to show his independence. Despite his difficulty in taking help after discharge, and because of the crises which await him at this point, we are convinced that follow-up is a necessary and absolutely integral part of the rehabilitation process. In other words, we believe that there must be a compulsory follow-up period which will provide the ex-offender with a transitional stage between prison and free life outside.

The system of follow-up supervision which comes closest to our philosophy and rehabilitation needs is that of parole.

Summary: Expectations from Parole in Israel

Success or failure of the parole system depends in large degree upon the adequacy of parole board screening, the quality of field officers, and the realistic size of caseloads. But outcome also depends a great deal upon the willingness of community resources such as employers, public agencies, and citizens generally to give the ex-offender a chance to re-integrate himself into society. Under the average caliber parole system about 30% of parole releases result in failure, and this number could be reduced considerably by increased and better quality staff. The alarming recidivist rate

in Israel strongly suggests the initiation and development of a parole program.³

It is our contention that there is no justification for the present practice in Israel of selecting only a small percentage of ex-offenders for follow-up care. This system, as presently operated by the Society for the Rehabilitation of Prisoners, is biased in the direction of "good risk offenders." Its basic premise denies the right of follow-up care to *all* ex-offenders, and clouds any really systematic, meaningful rehabilitation planning for offenders in general. It is difficult to believe that an informed Israeli public could be satisfied with a partial, voluntary, follow-up program which has little effect upon the overall recidivist rate, is economically more expensive than parole, and offers less protection to society.

The suggestions made in this paper point to a rather detailed exploration of existing services to adult offenders in Israel. These range from analysis of present sentencing practices in favour of the indeterminate sentencing, establishment of a Parole Authority and Parole Board, increasing present prison social service staff, setting up appropriate district parole offices (perhaps in cooperation with adult probation authorities), and systematically working with community representatives and agencies to facilitate after-care planning.

To summarize, the authors believe that after-care service should be required of all ex-offenders in the measure and form appropriate to the specific individual. We believe that the logic which makes

³ For a presentation of raw data concerning both juvenile and adult recidivism as well as demographic information for Israeli offenders see: O. Schmels and D. Salemann (Eds.), *Criminal Statistics in Israel, 1949-1963, Volume I—Tables*. Institute of Criminology, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1962, Tables 47-102, pp. 193-211.

such follow-up care presently available in Israel for juvenile offenders applies as well to adult offenders. Finally, we believe that the parole program structured as a government service is needed

and can work in Israel. The time has come to put into practice what we have learned about rehabilitating offenders and to legitimize the efforts we have begun in this direction.