



# Limudiah

ANTIDOTE TO FAILURE



NACOEJ AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS OF INTENSIVE EDUCATION FOR ETHIOPIAN CHILDREN IN ISRAEL

FALL 2009

## Why is the *Limudiah* Different from All Other After-School Programs?

While there are other after-school programs in Israel, the NACOEJ *Limudiah* Program is tailored specifically to the learning and cultural needs of Ethiopian-Israeli children who come from a vastly different background than other Israeli children.

For ten to twelve hours each week, *Limudiah* teachers provide intensive academic help and encouragement to Ethiopian-Israeli children. Classes are small with no more than eight children to one teacher.

Many of the children come from homes where their parents are illiterate in their own language, and thus cannot help their children themselves. The *Limudiah* teachers structure their special curriculum based on the children's specific, unique needs. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Rather teachers are flexible and if a particular teaching method is not working for a child, they can try alternatives. They also "pre-teach" material the children will encounter in their homeroom classes enabling the children to benefit more from regular classroom instruction.

Classes are held in the children's own schools where they are already comfortable. Our superb relationships with the schools makes this possible and thus enables us to avoid bussing students which would take away from precious learning time.

The children are provided with all their textbooks, workbooks,



and "fun" books through the program, a fact that is essential since 70% of Ethiopian-Israeli children live below the poverty line. Hot lunches are provided every day that the *Limudiah* is in session. This is especially important as many children arrive at school not having had breakfast, and with no bag lunch.

Holiday celebrations provide *Limudiah* children with great fun, as well as encouraging them to present their holiday projects to their peers, thus reinforcing language skills and building confidence in children who are often too intimidated to speak up in class. The children are encouraged to teach their non-Ethio-

Continued on page 4

## LOOK AT THESE NUMBERS!

- Overall in Israel, 35% of Ethiopian children have average or above average achievements in their classes.
- In NACOEJ *Limudiah* programs, 80% of children have average or above average achievements in their classes.
- In our largest *Limudiah* program, in Rehovot, 88% of children have average or above achievements in their classes.





## From Student to Teacher: “Closing a Circle...”

Anat Tayatchu was a student in the first pilot NACOEJ *Limudiah* in the Horeb School in Ramla during the 1990's. The principal of her school was Sarah Moshe.

Fast forward to 2008. Anat was asked by Sarah Moshe to become a teacher in the *Limudiah* program in the Yeshurun School. Anat, who was excited and moved by this offer, had

come full circle, from student to teacher, or as she described it, “...closing a circle. On the one side I was a graduate of the *Limudiah* and on the other, I would be able to help students who needed help as I received it as a student in the 90's.”

Here are Anat's feelings about her experience as a *Limudiah* student all those years ago:

*“I do not have the words to describe what I received as a student in the *Limudiah*. I received things that the teachers in the morning were not able to give us but in the *Limudiah* was possible because of the small groups that made it possible for the *Limudiah* teachers to relate to each and every student and cause great success in the area of studies and other areas: social and emotional...I can only say that the contribution of the project [Limudiah] is tremendous and important to the students.”*

We are thrilled to have Anat as a teacher in the *Limudiah*. She's living testimony to the extraordinary value of these critically important programs and to what students can achieve when they have the benefit of the *Limudiah* experience. ■

## *Limudiah* Classes Disrupted by War



The Gaza War this past January 2009 had a dramatic impact on the south of Israel, including our *Limudiah* students living in Gedera, which was within direct range of the rocket fire.

For many of the children in the city of Gedera, school assignments were sent via the Internet so they could keep up with their studies at home. For the *Limudiah* students, this did not work since very few Ethiopian-Israelis have computers in their homes.

*Limudiah* teachers, at personal risk, went to the apartments of the families of their students, to help the children keep up with their studies and to distract them from their fear by keeping them busy with all sorts of activities.

After the schools reopened, the *Limudiah* teachers made huge efforts to help the children close the educational gaps that occurred as a result of the war. As well, they went to great lengths to aid the children in coping with the anxieties that plagued them following the rocket attacks.

It was a difficult time for all and a time that called for heroic measures. Our NACOEJ *Limudiah* teachers and students rose to the occasion and did what needed to be done to keep the children's education going. We salute their courage and bravery. ■

## Meet Some of the Children

**A** valuable way judge the success of the NACOEJ *Limudiah* programs is to see their effect on the progress of individual children. So, we would like you to meet...

**NOI** is a third-grader who could not comprehend geometry and, as a result, simply refused to do her homework or even try. Her *Limudiah* teacher decided to try an unusual approach. She drew a number of pictures, asking Noi to describe what she had drawn, things like polygons and different lines. She did not call it geometry. Together she and Noi used hand games to demonstrate sharp and other angles. They talked about how certain shapes got their names.

Finally the teacher told Noi that everything they were learning together really was geometry! This made Noi understand that it wasn't as hard as she had thought. She began to relax in her approach to her workbook exercises and eventually really began to grasp and understand geometry, an important math concept that will help her immeasurably in her studies in the future. Equally

important is the feeling of success she achieved by mastering this skill, a lesson that will stand her in good stead in her educational future.

**MOSHE**, a first-grader, is one of three boys in his family. His mother had great difficulty controlling him. He came to the *Limudiah* with no study skills. He would wander around the classroom, bothering, and even sometimes hitting, other children. He couldn't sit still or focus on his studies.

Ilana, his *Limudiah* teacher, worked intensively one-on-one with him on both behavior and study habits. She also had many conversations with Moshe and encouraged and supported him, both when he tried and when he succeeded. The results have been extraordinary. Today Moshe sits quietly in class and does not wander about the classroom. He makes a great effort to learn and understand and is the picture of happiness when he succeeds and receives praise from the *Limudiah* teachers. ■



## NACOEJ Mission Participants Visit *Limudiah* Classes in Israel

This past May 2009, NACOEJ took a group of supporters on a Mission to Ethiopia and Israel, celebrating the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Operation Solomon, the miraculous airlift of 14,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel. One of the highlights of the Israel component of the mission was visiting a first-grade *Limudiah* class – a delight for all involved.

The children were very excited about showing everyone how well they read, and did so with tremendous pride shining in their eyes. It was interesting to note that their teacher was using a combination of art and reading to teach

them about traffic safety habits, i.e., making sure to hold someone's hand when you cross the street. This made the reading lesson more alive and exciting for the children and utilized more than just language skills in the teaching and learning process.

Our group saw one little girl in the class who was clearly in need of remedial help. The teachers and principal had already identified her and were in the process of setting up a program of special assistance to enable her to catch up to the other children. ■

## Working in Partnership

An important component of what makes the *Limudiah* programs so successful is the fact that we utilize partnerships wherever we can to strengthen and enhance the programming.

Primary among our partners are the schools themselves as well as the municipalities in which the schools are located and, of great importance of course, the parents of our students.

Our working relationships with the staff and municipality of every school in which we have a *Limudiah* enable us to take advantage of resources we might not otherwise have access to and make it possible for our programs to run very effectively.

The parents of our students make a modest financial contribution to the program, investing them in its success. They attend meetings with the schools and municipalities and are invited to participate in special activities with the children.

As well, we work hand-in-hand with local absorption departments, the Israeli Association for Community Centers, and PELE. These partnerships enable the *Limudiah* programs to run smoothly and are also testimony to the fact that all these entities recognize the importance of the *Limudiah* programs in enabling Ethiopian-Israeli children to reach their full potential. ■



## Learning to Give Back with Joy!

Purim is a joyous time in the Jewish calendar. And lots of fun for kids! One of the beautiful customs of Purim is to send gifts of two different kinds of foods – called *Mishloach Manot* – to friends and family on Purim day.

The Ethiopian-Israeli children in our NACOEJ *Limudiah* classes learn very valuable lessons about giving back to others in the community by preparing *Mishloach Manot* packages themselves which they then deliver to soldiers and residents of nursing homes.

It is a hands-on way for them to learn more about Purim – and about their responsibilities to care for the community in which they live. A win/win situation! ■



# Impending Disaster

The present economic crisis is difficult for all of us to understand. Imagine how much more so it must be for little Ethiopian-Israeli children who were in a *Limudiah* class last year and are now being told they will not be in one again! There is no way for them to understand the why's and wherefore's. They just know they're out in the cold.

Despite the success of our *Limudiah* programs, the economic woes of the world have forced us to already cut out programs in this past school year (2008-2009) affecting more than 300 children. If we can't find a way to close the funding gap, we will be forced to make more painful cuts in the 2009-2010 school year, with as many as 400 children in danger of being cut from the program.

It is a heartbreaking situation. Especially because we know the *Limudiah* programs make such an enormous difference for the children. Listen to part of a letter we received in June from Yossi Amar, Principal in the Efrati School, "Observing on a daily basis...I am happy to say this activity [*Limudiah*] contributes greatly to



*the students from the community...They very much enjoy Limudiah...there has been a significant change in their study habits, in homework preparation, in their attitude to studies and their diligence and investment. This is of course expressed in their study abilities and their grades."*

We've heard reports this year of children who are not keeping up in school because they were cut from the program. Without continuing educational support

these children are likely to experience failure in school which will lead to alienation and frustration, both sources of dropping out.

It is our hope that we will be able to raise the funds necessary to keep all the children in the *Limudiah* programs. **With a special gift to NACOEJ of \$1,400, you can ensure a place in a *Limudiah* for a child who needs to be there.** ■

## Why is the *Limudiah* different? *continued from page 1*

pian school peers about unique Ethiopian holidays such as Sigd. The *Limudiah* also encourages Ethiopian parents to join in these celebrations, making them feel a part of their children's academic lives.

The NACOEJ *Limudiah* programs are so successful – largely due to our wonderful friends like you – that 80% of *Limudiah* children are at grade level or above, as opposed to 35% of Ethiopian children nationwide! This has translated into cities all over Israel asking NACOEJ to open a *Limudiah* in their schools. We are limited in doing this only by a lack of funding which is heartbreaking for the hundreds of children waiting to enter this wonderful program. ■

## FACTS

### THE NACOEJ LIMUDIAH PROGRAM: 2008-2009



CITY	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
Ramla	3	102
Rehovot	3	210
Lod	3	147
Rishon LeZion	1	151
Kiryat Ekron	1	47
Nes Ziona	1	38
Gedera	3	96
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED IN 2008-2009</b>		<b>791</b>

Although sadly the numbers are down from last year due to the terrible economy, you can take great pleasure and satisfaction in knowing you are helping close to 800 Ethiopian-Israeli children succeed in school.



**NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON ETHIOPIAN JEWRY  
NACOEJ AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS OF INTENSIVE EDUCATION  
FOR ETHIOPIAN CHILDREN IN ISRAEL**

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