



# Limudiah

ANTIDOTE TO FAILURE

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

AUTUMN 2008

## WELCOME...

...to the *Limudiah* newsletter, written by Caroline Barg, showcasing the NACOEJ (North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry) *Limudiah*: After-School Programs of Intensive Education for Ethiopian children in Israel.

Because you are, or can be, a deeply appreciated supporter of these vitally important educational programs for Ethiopian-Israelis, we want to give you a "bird's eye" view of some highlights of the 2007-2008 school year. Our goal is to publish this newsletter each year with information and facts from the prior school year.

## LOOK AT THESE NUMBERS!

- Overall in Israel only 40% of Ethiopian children achieve at or above grade level.
- In NACOEJ *Limudiah* programs, 81% of children achieve at or above grade level.
- In our longest running *Limudiah* program, in Ramla, 91% of children achieve at or above grade level.



## The Limudiah Program

In Israel, 70% of Ethiopian children live below the poverty line. Economic circumstances often force their families to settle in depressed neighborhoods with high crime rates and overcrowded schools.

The academic and economic futures of these deserving children are in great danger if they do not get the help they need at this age.

Indeed, an uncounted number of Ethiopian elementary school children quietly drop out of their Israeli schools at young ages. Some show up in classes occasionally, others spend all their time wandering the malls or the streets.

The reason for their disappearance: repeated classroom failure causing humiliation, frustration, anger and alienation. In high school the Ethiopian dropout rate is twice the national average.

The antidote: *Limudiah* programs enable these bright children to succeed in the early years of their education. *Limudiah* children stay in school, are respected by teachers and

classmates, and go on to academic and social achievements that lead to bright futures.

The *Limudiah* programs are currently in 21 schools in eight cities in Israel. The children receive 10-12 hours of intensive educational help weekly, focusing on reading, writing, math, and basic study skills. The children meet in small groups with a ratio of one teacher to eight students, enabling them to receive essential individual attention. Included are enrichment programs in music and art.

A vital part of the program is a nourishing lunch which enables the children to concentrate and study well during the afternoon hours. These are often the most nutritious meals the children receive all day.

The highly successful NACOEJ *Limudiah* programs protect the children from experiencing classroom failure, preventing the anger and alienation which can lead to dropping out.

**For Ethiopian-Israeli children, *Limudiah* is the antidote to failure. ■**

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## A CHALLENGE!

There are presently 400 youngsters on the waiting list for the 2008-2009 *Limudiah* programs. Expanding to help them is now all the more complicated because we have actually had to cut back programs due to the fluctuations of the dollar and the unprecedented financial crisis in the U.S.

So we would like to urge you to encourage your friends, family, synagogue, school, business, foundation etc. to do everything they possibly can, even in hard times, to help support the *Limudiah* programs.

### NAMING OPPORTUNITIES:

Contact the NACOEJ office for information on exciting naming opportunities to sponsor lunch, math, English, or Jewish holiday programs within the *Limudiah*. The cost is probably much lower than you might suppose.

Please call 212-233-5200, ext. 224 or e-mail to Orlee Guttman at [oguttman@nacoelj.org](mailto:oguttman@nacoelj.org).

If there is any question in your mind about the value of these programs, please read these words from a school principal in Lod:

*In Lod, NACOEJ has been active for over 13 years, in four schools, in a city where the percentage of Ethiopian children is very high (70%). Due to the fact that these children come from homes that are not literate, that can't support them, and with (significant) cultural differences, the NACOEJ Limudiah narrows these gaps and works to close them....*

*The Limudiah work takes place in full coordination with the children's homeroom teachers, in order to bring the majority of the children to grade level, and to help them stay at that level. The success rates in the field confirm the need for having these children in this high level program....*

*Yardena Cohen  
Director, Department of Elementary School Education, Lod*



## Meet Some of the Children...

One of the best ways to 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:

**ADAYA...**a third-grader in Lod, seemed to have real potential, but her *Limudiah* teacher noted that, like many Ethiopian children, she was afraid to ask questions in class. (In Ethiopian culture, children do not make demands of authorities.) The *Limudiah* teacher used her one-on-one time

with Adaya to encourage her to ask the teacher questions rather than just reply to the questions the teacher asked! Speaking to the class, the teacher often commented, "Adaya asked me a good question about..." and gradually Adaya understood that the rules were different in an Israeli school. Today she asks questions, excels in arithmetic and is at grade level in reading.

**SARAH...**a difficult sixth-grader in her first *Limudiah* class, paid no attention to her homeroom teacher's instructions and refused to do homework even when the whole *Limudiah* class participated. *Limudiah* teachers are encouraged to find or create special materials for individual children when needed, and Sarah's teacher brought in books and art reflecting Sarah's few interests, to share with her. Gradually, Sarah began to put effort into her work. Her grade average in her homeroom class rose from 60 to 85.

**SHLOMO...**a second-grader in Gedara, couldn't learn to read. When his *Limudiah* teacher brought him extra-large, brightly colored letters, his face lit up. She and Shlomo's mother took him to an ophthalmologist who prescribed glasses. Shlomo began to read, but, a year behind his classmates, he was afraid of being laughed at in his large homeroom class. In the small, friendly *Limudiah*, he even read aloud — to applause. Today he is a voracious reader and an active participant in homeroom classwork. ■





Peachy Levy with children at the Bar-Ilan School in Ramla.

## The Peachy Levy Back-to-School Program Getting Kids Back on Track...

For Ethiopian-Israeli children, the summer months can be bleak and unproductive. Their parents cannot afford to send them to day camps, and in many cases they are unable to help their children with reading or any other educational skills. The result is that the children begin the new school year at a very distinct disadvantage compared to their veteran Israeli classmates, and often experience humiliating failures as they struggle to catch up.

With the generous assistance of Peachy and Mark Levy, NACOEJ runs highly successful, two week, back-to-school programs during the late summer. The programs provide the children

with five and one half hours daily of in-depth reviews in reading, math, general knowledge and other study areas, balanced with games, sports and arts and crafts. The children receive a nutritious, filling mid-morning meal.

The dramatic improvement in the children's skills as they begin the new school year is striking testimony to the value of the Back-to-School programs, especially in conjunction with the regular *Limudiah* classes. In the summer of 2008, we were able to run these highly successful programs in four schools in two cities and urgently need funding to be able to re-open them in additional locations next summer. ■



## Ethiopian-Israeli Children Give Back to their Homeland at an Early Age

Shortly before Purim this past year, all the third-grade children in *Limudiah* programs (in 21 schools in eight cities throughout Israel), made Mishloach Manot packages filled with the traditional gifts of foods given on Purim Day, for soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces.

The children also wrote personal letters to the soldiers expressing their gratitude for everything these brave young people, including many Ethiopian soldiers, do to protect Israel and the Jewish people. The children are proud to have the opportunity to give back to Israel for all that Israel has done for them. ■

## BIRTHRIGHT HILLEL TEAMS UP WITH NACOEJ



Forty college students from New York University, Columbia University and Barnard College worked with Ethiopian-Israeli children in the NACOEJ *Limudiah* program at the Harin School in Ramla, one of Israel's poorest cities, as part of the Taglit-Birthright Israel: Hillel program.

In the words of one participant: "Being in a classroom full of energetic and enthusiastic children showed how important their Hebrew and English education is to them and their parents – many of whom I learned are not completely fluent or literate in either language. I was very impressed with the *Limudiah* teachers..." ■



## A Nutritious Lunch Translates into a Productive Afternoon

It is a known fact that when children are hungry, they cannot concentrate on their schoolwork. The NACOEJ *Limudiah* provides the children with a nutritious, delicious lunch at the outset of the afternoon program so that the time they spend in class can be productive and they can accomplish as much as possible.

The *Limudiah* lunches are often the best source of nutrition the children receive. A large percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli families live under the poverty line, making it difficult for the parents to feed their families adequately. *Limudiah* lunches help improve the children's general health and are a very important component of the program. ■

# FACTS

## The NACOEJ Limudiah Program: 2007-2008

CITY	SCHOOL	GRADES	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
Ramla	Harin	1-4	62
	Bar-Ilan	1-4	35
	Maanit	1-4	34
Lod	Maimon	1-5	64
	Noam Hameiri	1-4	41
	Rambam	1-4	40
Rehovot	Habanim	1-3	42
	Ben Zvi	1-6	53
	Sarid	3-6	29
Rehovot	Smilansky	1-6	33
	Tahkemoni	1-6	34
	Ma'alot Meshulam	1-5	111
Rishon LeZion	Yeshurun	1-6	145
Kiryat Ekron	Ohel Meir	1-6	64
	Ben Zvi	1-6	21
Nes Ziona	Reut	1-6	56
Gedara	Ohel Shalom	1-6	43
	Pines	1-3	24
	Efrati	1-6	36
Be'er Ya'akov	Rashbi	1-5	113
	Hadarim	1-4	34

**TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED IN 2007/2008:**

**1,114**

***You can take great pleasure and satisfaction in knowing that you are helping over 1,000 Ethiopian-Israeli children succeed in school.***



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