

2024 Annual Report


NACOEJ:
42 Years of
Critical Education,
Aid, and Advocacy
for Ethiopian Jews





Mission Statement

The North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (NACOEJ) is a non-profit organization founded in 1982 with four mandates:

- To help Ethiopian Jews survive in Ethiopia.
 - To assist them in reaching Israel.
 - To aid in the absorption of Ethiopian Jews into Israeli society.
 - To help preserve their unique and ancient Jewish culture.
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Message from the President



Peter Halasz
President

The entire Ethiopian Israeli community suffered greatly in the 2023-2024 academic year.

Hundreds of our Ethiopian Israeli students – current and former – were called up to fight in a difficult, dangerous war. Even for those at home, schools were closed for long periods and when they re-opened, faced bomb threats that sent students into shelters. This trauma, coming on the heels of the Covid epidemic, greatly affected their studies, making NACOEJ's Limudiah teachers more crucial than ever.

Ethiopian families were among the 150,000 Israelis who were displaced. NACOEJ stepped in to provide Ethiopian food items to elderly community members in Ashkelon, Sderot, and Ofakim, and ready-made meals to Ethiopian residents of Sderot who had been evacuated to hotels in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Prior to October 7, Israeli farmers relied on workers from Gaza and the West Bank to pick crops. Without these workers, food would be left to rot. NACOEJ staff joined NACOEJ scholarship recipients to work in the fields as part of the nationwide effort to keep food flowing to Israeli tables.

Conditions remain dire in Ethiopia as well. The 13,500 Ethiopian Jews still there face drought, famine, unemployment, inflation and war. Our programs for severely malnourished Jewish children, as well as for malnourished pregnant and nursing mothers, continue to grow. We also fund emergency distributions of grain to the Jewish communities in Gondar and Addis Ababa, wheat for Passover matzah, lunch for thousands of children in the summer camp, and more.

With the challenges Ethiopian Jews face both in Ethiopia and Israel, NACOEJ's work is more vital than ever.



NACOEJ/Limudiah Intensive Education Program for Ethiopian-Israeli School Children: Education in the shadow of war

The war that broke out at the beginning of the 2023-2024 academic year was devastating to Israel's children. The Israeli education system was faced with 150,000 internally displaced people whose children needed to be placed in new schools (or have schools especially created for them). Parents and teachers were in reserve duty or had extra duties on the home front. General anxiety, rockets, and alarms pervaded. Not surprisingly, the gap between students from stable households and students from weaker households (who cannot afford to provide tutoring to their children) widened.

After several weeks at home children returned to school. However, even in "safe" cities studies were held in rotation, some days at school and some days on Zoom, because there was not enough space in school shelters to hold everyone. Staff and students practiced getting into the shelters within a minute and a half several times a day. Children were worried about the hostages and their return, whether terrorists could reach their homes or schools, and about being protected.

The Limudiah Program opened as soon as possible, providing weekly hours of intensive study in Hebrew, math and study skills. **During the 2023-2024 academic year we served 410 students in 12 schools in six cities: Bat Yam, Beit Shemesh, Jerusalem, Kiryat Ekron, Lod, and Rishon Lezion.**

In most schools the Limudiah ran during school hours due to a long school day. Students are taken out of the classroom to learn Hebrew during their grammar or text lessons. They are taken out of math classes to learn math, etc. In schools where the Limudiah is held after school, students are given a nutritious meal first.



Limudiah teachers meet with schools' administrative staff to fine-tune goals and choose the students for each learning group. Participation in the program depends on the educational, emotional, and social situation of each student. Students with disciplinary issues and special education students are not included in the Limudiah. As always, at year-end meetings, school administrations and municipal partners expressed appreciation for the program and recognition of its accomplishments. ■

In addition to the formal Limudiah Program, in Rehovot we once again partnered with the municipality and Ethiopian community members who run the Awakat ('knowledge' in Amharic) Community Center. The community sought programs to reinforce children's skills in language, English, and math. Because of the Limudiah Program's excellent reputation, NACOEJ was asked to run the Awakat Centers' after-school educational programs. The NACOEJ program at Awakat is held three days a week. All the students are from the Ethiopian community. **During the 2023-2024 academic year, 25 students from third to eighth grade studied at the center.**

Middle School Limudiah: AL – Rising to Excellence

in Jerusalem and Lod we worked with municipal figures as well as principals of schools such as the Hebrew University High School (one of the most prestigious high schools in Israel) toward the goal of having Limudiah students accepted into these high schools. The Limudiah taught English, language arts and math.

The first step was to identify Ethiopian-Israeli students with motivation and good grades.

The goal is for these students to finish high school with a high-quality matriculation exam score so they can study in universities and acquire degrees with high potential for good employment and social mobility. **Out of the 21 6th grade students in the two Jerusalem schools, 13 students were accepted to excellent schools. All ten of the 8th grade students in Lod were accepted to the best schools in Lod.** Were it not for the program it is uncertain whether these schools and prestigious tracks would have been available to our students.

An added complication this year was that among the hundreds of thousands of evacuated and internally displaced people were dozens of Ethiopian families from the absorption center in Ashkelon who were evacuated to Jerusalem. Their children were integrated into Jerusalem schools. Twenty-two students aged 6-12 were integrated into the Reshit School in Jerusalem, where NACOEJ has a program. The school staff, including Limudiah teachers, had to deal with the emotional and social difficulties of the uprooted children.

2023-2024 Limudiah Programs: 410 students ■ 14 schools ■ 6 cities

Beit Shemesh - 7 students

Uziel School

Bat Yam - 89 students

Ben Gurion School, Harel School, Yitzhak Sadeh School, Jerusalem School

Kiryat Ekron - 26 students

Ohel Meir School

Jerusalem - 62 students

Guatemala School, Reishit School

Lod - 173 students

HaMaapilim School, Levi Eshkol School, Noam Hameiri School, Rambam School

Rishon Lezion - 28 students

Yeshurun School

Finally, NACOEJ distributed 17 tablets to students in Rehovot, Lod and Bat Yam Limudiah programs who did not have computers at home so they could participate in class. ■



NACOEJ High School Sponsorship Program

The NACOEJ High School Sponsorship Program enables Ethiopian-Israeli students to take full advantage of educational opportunities in their schools. Basic tuition is covered by the Israeli government, but schools charge additional fees which are often beyond the means of Ethiopian families. Further, better quality schools with higher expenses, some of which are semi-private, may not accept Ethiopian students, under the assumption that they cannot afford these extra costs. The High School Sponsorship Program provides these crucial funds, allowing more students to study on a full matriculation track.



NACOEJ/Barney & Rachel Landau Gottstein Adopt-A-Student (AAS) College Sponsorship Program

In the 2023-2024 academic year, donors supported 114 students across 15 schools (including two students in a private school).

The NACOEJ/Barney & Rachel Landau Gottstein Adopt-A-Student College Sponsorship Program (AAS) is our longest running program, starting in 1987. Through AAS, thousands of Ethiopian-Israeli college students have received financial support, helping them complete their degrees.

Israel covers tuition for many Ethiopian Israelis, but students still have living expenses – rent, food, transportation, textbooks and more, some of which are covered by a sponsorship, which is a wonderful investment in the Ethiopian-Israeli community and in Israel itself.

In the 2023-2024 academic year, 49 donors sponsored 148 students in 33 institutions of higher learning.

During the 2023-2024 academic year, Ethiopian-Israeli students faced adversity as never before. A disproportionate number of Ethiopian-Israeli soldiers were killed since October 7, and appropriate mental health services in Amharic are lacking. While thankfully, none of our students were killed, they were living within a particularly bereaved community and had to work and study while being interrupted by reserve duty or otherwise drafted into the war effort. Most of our students were able to stay the course despite these hardships.

Elka - A Leadership Program for Ethiopians Working Within the Education System

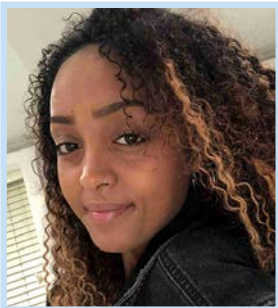
In 2023-2024 we worked with the third cohort of Elka, once again in cooperation with Herzog College and a department within the Ministry of Education. Twenty talented and experienced educators participated in the program, which we shortened to one year instead of two. The program structure remains the same, including lectures by educators, workshops, and one-on one training with senior mentors in the field of education. One of last year's participants was already appointed principal at a school in Rishon LeZion. ■



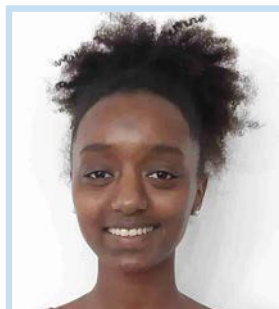
Tova Wendemagen had to work fewer hours because her fiancé was wounded, and she needed to take time out to help him heal. She also worried about four of her brothers in combat units.



Natane Wotl, a medical student, served three long rounds of reserves as an officer in a combat unit, and as a result is now taking a break from his studies.



Esther Gadamu spoke for many when she wrote her sponsor, saying: "Among all the feelings, challenges, and hopes, we are still here, trying to keep up a routine and get some sense of proportion regarding life in general. I started last semester a bit differently... It was very hard to disconnect myself from what my heart was feeling and what my brain needed to do; to find the strength to disconnect myself from what is actually happening and give my all in order to meet the expectations of my life's path.



Ru Yasot, a student of material engineering at Ben Gurion University was in reserve duty in the technology unit of the intelligence corps from November to January, and then was called up again in the spring of 2024.

In Ethiopia

NACOEJ provides indispensable assistance to the Jewish community in Gondar City and Addis Ababa Ethiopia. In the period covered by this report, NACOEJ funded food aid to the community while educating the American public about the issue.

NACOEJ's provision of food for the entire community, especially for the youngest children and pregnant and nursing mothers, has for years kept this population from starvation. Unfortunately, food aid is still necessary, in line with our first mandate, to keep Ethiopian Jews alive until they reach Israel.

This past year, the situation in Ethiopia has grown progressively worse for the general population, causing an even more intense crisis for our Jewish community. Employment rates and opportunities have plummeted, food prices have doubled and general annual inflation is 20%-30%.

The continuing drought in some areas, accompanied by flooding in other areas, has wreaked havoc with food distribution.

Added to that, the civil war in Ethiopia continues, also affecting the supply routes and causing food shortages and security risks.

In the Gondar region, where most Jews in Ethiopia live, militias are entering the city. Shootings and kidnappings abound. Capital and businesses have left for more secure regions, so jobs are scarce. As a result, food is even scarcer, and more expensive.

These Ethiopian Jews would not have survived without NACOEJ.



Our meal program for children under five and pregnant and nursing mothers continued to grow, with well over a thousand children and mothers in the program. These meals prevent deaths and stunting for the youngest children most vulnerable to malnutrition.

NACOEJ also continued to fund grain distributions to the entire Jewish communities in Gondar City and Addis Ababa, about 13,500 people in total – 2,500 people in Addis Ababa and 11,000 people in Gondar. As in past years, many people claimed that these distributions were life-saving.

For Passover 2024, we were fortunate to receive a generous gift from a single donor that allowed us to fund the baking of all 80,000 matzahs for the Passover holiday. Without this gift, we would not have been able to make this happen.

Finally, NACOEJ provided lunches for about 3000 students aged 6-18 in the Kaytana (summer camp). The Kaytana began on July 1 and ended in September. ■



Statement of Financial Position and Activities

North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, Inc. and Affiliate

Combined Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2023

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
<u>ASSETS</u>			
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 887,503	\$ 131,290	\$ 1,018,793
Contributions receivable, net	53,960	72,935	126,895
Prepaid expenses	82,646		82,646
Investments	4,209,274		4,209,274
Right of use assets	104,286		104,286
Security deposits	15,553		15,553
Total assets	\$ 5,353,222	\$ 204,225	\$ 5,557,447
<u>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</u>			
Liabilities:			
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 145,125		\$ 145,125
Lease liabilities	104,286		104,286
Deferred public support	131,290		131,290
Total liabilities	380,701		380,701
Net assets:			
Without donor restrictions	4,972,521		4,972,521
With donor restrictions		204,225	204,225
Total net assets	4,972,521	204,225	5,176,746
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 5,353,222	\$ 204,225	\$ 5,557,447

See Notes to Combined Financial Statements

North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, Inc. and Affiliate

Combined Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2023

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
<u>Operating Activities</u>			
Revenues and Other Support:			
Public support	\$ 886,815	\$ 534,220	\$ 1,421,035
Sales (net of cost of goods sold of \$404)	3,668		3,668
Other income	1,224		1,224
Interest and dividend income	174,845		174,845
Net assets released from restrictions	529,725	(529,725)	
Total revenues and other support	1,596,277	4,495	1,600,772
Expenses:			
Program services:			
Relief in Ethiopia	723,662		723,662
Assistance in Israel	1,120,826		1,120,826
Information and Education - USA	185,876		185,876
Total program services	2,030,364		2,030,364
Supporting services:			
Management and general	203,327		203,327
Fundraising	258,431		258,431
Total supporting services	461,758		461,758
Total expenses	2,492,122		2,492,122
Change in net assets from operations	(895,845)	4,495	(891,350)
<u>Nonoperating Activities</u>			
Investment return, net	290,481		290,481
Total nonoperating activities	290,481		290,481
Change in net assets	(605,364)	4,495	(600,869)
Net assets, beginning of year	5,577,885	199,730	5,777,615
Net assets, end of year	\$ 4,972,521	\$ 204,225	\$ 5,176,746

See Notes to Combined Financial Statements

Board of Directors | Advisory Board | Staff

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Ora Segel, **Director of Limudiah Program**
Eti Shriki, **Administrative Director**

Thank You

*We deeply appreciate the loyalty and dedication of our wonderful donors to the Ethiopian-Jewish community through good times and bad.
We are profoundly grateful to each and every one of you.*

How Donor Contributions were Spent

Program	81.47%
Fundraising.....	10.7%
Admin	8.16%

Sources of Funding

Individuals	84%
Israel Dept. of Education & Municipalities.....	11%
Foundations & Synagogues.....	5%

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Education, Aid, and Advocacy for
Ethiopian Jews**



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