



WINTER
2018

A Farewell to a Great Man

On October 21, 2018, NACOEJ lost a very dear friend, Barney Gottstein, z'l. He was a philanthropist whose generosity for Ethiopian Jews was outstanding. But it was his generosity of spirit, his deep involvement, his kindness of heart and his outreach to those in need that made Barney so special.



▲ Rachel and Barney

Let me tell you a bit about this good man. Many years ago, we opened an envelope in the NACOEJ office that held a check for a startling sum. Evelyn Deitchman, a beloved volunteer who ran our college sponsorship program at the U.S. end, read the note that came with it. It said, "I want to adopt 50 college students."

After a moment of shock, Evelyn phoned Barney in Alaska and said, "Mr. Gottstein, this is a very generous gift, but let me suggest you adopt 15 students...this check can cover them all for several years."

Barney's response was, "No, I want 50 students. There will be another check next year." That was the beginning.

Barney's wife Rachel, his full partner in life and spirit, began writing individual letters to each student. The number increased every year (now over 100) and Rachel still writes to each one. Sometimes Barney would phone a student who had become discouraged and considered dropping out of school. His personal empathy and encouragement kept them in school.

After the death of Vidal Sassoon, the original sponsor of our Adopt-A-Student College Sponsorship Program, the Gottsteins took it on. They also sponsored the Literacy Program in our Limudiah classes. One day Barney called me. He'd learned that Ethiopian-Israeli families could not afford books for their little children. "I want to provide those books, through NACOEJ," he said. To this day, Barney's Books funds the beautiful books for the college students he and Rachel sponsor, to take home to read to their little siblings – books the children keep as their own.

What is Happening - and Not Happening - in Ethiopia?

In our last letter we mentioned the latest Israeli government promise to bring in 1000 Ethiopian Jews in 2019, and we promised you more details.

But details remain scarce. Though PM Netanyahu said the 1000 would be "parents of children already in Israel", some are concerned that the "children" are usually adults, and the eligible parents are often old, frail, or sick. Some are grandparent-guardians of young children still in Ethiopia. Taking away these guardians would devastate the children.

Knesset Member Avraham Neguise told "The Israeli Media Line" he welcomed the decision, "however it is not solving the problem." (It would leave behind 7000.)

Israeli Rabbi Menachem Waldman, a staunch advocate for the Ethiopian aliyah, said: "In Addis Ababa, they've been waiting for aliyah for 20 years, and in Gondar...from seven to 25 years. If someone in the government thinks these delays will lead them to give up – they won't give up!"



And apparently the proposed Israeli budget for 2019 contains not one shekel for any Ethiopian aliyah!

Still, there's hope. Isaac Herzog, the new chairman of the Jewish Agency, considers Netanyahu's statement a step in the right direction, "But it is necessary to commit to bringing the rest...The Jewish Agency will be ready to absorb them at any time, and to help fulfill their dream of reuniting with their relatives in the State of Israel."

At NACOEJ we say a hearty "Amen" to that.

Thank You Shoshana!



In 1992, when we needed a new Director to represent NACOEJ in Israel, and to run our then-small after-school program for struggling Ethiopian-Israeli school children, Shoshana Ben-Dor fit the bill perfectly.

She was an educator, working on a PhD in Ethiopian-Jewish tradition, knew Amharic and even ritual Ge'ez, had personal relationships with Ethiopian Israelis, and was on our Israel staff part-time. So, of course, we hired her as our Director of NACOEJ-Israel.

Over the next 26 years, Shoshana and her hand-picked, personally-trained teachers created the unique Limudiah Program, enabling thousands of Ethiopian children to succeed in grade school, be successful in high school, qualify for higher education, and make good lives in Israel.

Welcome David!



After interviewing many excellent candidates, we are delighted to have as Shoshana's successor, David Mihret, an Ethiopian Israeli with an outstanding record as Director of the Steering Committee for Ethiopian Jews in Israeli Schools, where he managed teams of 120 school counselors, academic advisors, and educational

mediators in 160 schools. He brings us valuable experience with the Ministry of Education and other Israeli ministries, local authorities, and non-profits, as well as his personal perspectives.

David was 16 when his family left Ethiopia in 1981, trying to reach Israel via the perilous UN refugee camps in Sudan. Sudanese soldiers raided the camp in which the family found shelter, and David lost three brothers and four

On her own time, Shoshana worked with anthropologists to record Ethiopian-Jewish synagogue services, religious chants, and teachings. She established the NACOEJ Teaching Tent at the yearly Sigd festival in Jerusalem, and has translated the Sigd liturgy, creating the first Ge'ez/Hebrew Sigd siddur. These major achievements go far toward fulfilling NACOEJ's fourth mandate, to assist in cultural preservation.

Shoshana has spoken at Knesset committees, served on numerous panels and committees dealing with Ethiopian-Israeli issues, and is considered by many Ethiopians as one of their own. After 26 years of outstanding accomplishment, we extend to Shoshana our best wishes for a happy retirement, our great words of praise for her work with NACOEJ, and a heart-felt "Thank you, Shoshana!"



Please scan the QR code for a video of Shoshana's farewell speech to the NACOEJ Board or go to: www.nacoej.org/llol-49

uncles, none of whom the family has been able to trace. In 1984, he and his remaining family were rescued by Mossad agents, just before Operation Moses.

David arrived in Israel at 19, never having been to school, though his father had taught him to read and write Amharic. After mastering Hebrew and much of his missed education in less than a year, David was accepted into a pre-college prep course, and went on to a degree in Engineering, followed by a BA from Bar-Ilan University and an MA from Hebrew University in other fields. **Along the way, we are happy to say, he was sponsored in our NACOEJ/Barney & Rachel Landau Gottstein Adopt-A-Student College Program.**

David has served in the IDF, speaks two Ethiopian languages, and is now strengthening his English, his fourth language, as our new NACOEJ-Israel Director. ■

Condolences...

- To NACOEJ Board member, **Rachel Landau Gottstein**, on the loss of her dearly beloved husband and partner in philanthropy and life, Barney Gottstein, z'l. Our hearts go out to their seven children, grandchildren, and a host of friends and admirers of this great man. (Please see page 1.)

- To the **family of Hadassah Linfield Weingarten**, who helped to professionalize NACOEJ in its early years and served as our Managing Director as we grew. Descended from a long line of rabbis, Hadassah was a strong leader and feminist with a passion for helping those in need, especially Jews. With NACOEJ she aided

in secret efforts to bring Ethiopian Jews to Israel and helped establish our educational programs in Israel. Our hearts go out to her husband Dr. Allen, her son Assemblyman Joel, her daughter Jessica, and in-laws and grandchildren. All of us at NACOEJ treasure her memory.

- To **Jill Cohen**, President of Prospect Direct in Milwaukee, with whom NACOEJ has worked for over 25 years, on the loss of her beloved mother, Dolores Cohen. Condolences go as well to Dolores's grandson, Dan Nathan, Vice President of Prospect Direct, and her great-grandson, Julian Nathan.

Jews (Ethiopian) in the News!

Ethiopian Jews in Israel often make headlines – whether for valor in the Israel Defense Forces or for outstanding efforts in civilian life.

Recently so many have done so well that I wish we could devote a whole page of Lifeline to each one. That's not possible, so we'll give just a quick look at two of them, their photos and their achievements (in brief). More will follow in other mailings.

And when you've read about them, ask yourself and others: "With so much talent and ambition in this Jewish community, why do the powers-to-be hesitate to bring all the rest of them to Israel? They're an asset to the Jewish homeland!"

Wheelchair Fencing Star!



By Zahal Disabled Veterans Fund, Times of Israel

In a clash with terrorists, three soldiers in the famed Golani Brigade were killed. One, Motoko Rada, was left paralyzed from the waist down.

His world turned black, but not for long.

"I love challenges," he said. He got married, fathered twins, and when he heard of wheelchair fencing, he went to the national group in his wheelchair to take up the sport.

Last September, as a rookie, Motoko accompanied the team to the World Cup matches in Poland, "to get a little experience". To everyone's surprise (including his own) he won three matches, overcoming the present world champion! What's next? **Hopefully the Tokyo Olympics.**

Prize Winner!



Alemwork Marsha Davidian didn't reach Israel till she was 11.

As a young woman, she graduated from the Sam Spiegel Film and Television School in Jerusalem, **where she was sponsored by NACOEJ Board member, Deborah Goldstein.**

Now 38, and the director of the prize-winning film "The Fig Tree", she's a star among women directors.

At the recent Toronto International Film Festival, she received the prestigious Audentia Prize for the best woman film director. The award includes a check for 30,000 Euros!

"The Fig Tree" is about 14-year-old Mina. She's unhappy about her Jewish family's decision to flee war-torn Ethiopia for Israel. (They live comfortably near Addis Ababa where she has many friends and a non-Jewish boyfriend.)

The Award jury called the film "a solid story with grit and compassion", "stunning and illuminating" and "beautifully rendered by a perfect young cast." (The cast are all Ethiopian actors and amateurs.)

Asked what she would like people to think about the film, Alemwork says, "I'd like the film to evoke a personal family memory for the viewers – a memory that will remind them of something about their inner selves."

You can see "The Fig Tree" in Israel in early 2019. Or you can watch for it in America at Israel or Jewish Film Festivals; it's in Amharic with Hebrew and English translations. We know it will touch your heart. ■

A Farewell to a Great Man CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

For years, Barney and Rachel came to Israel to meet their students and have festive dinners with them. On their way to Israel, when they stopped in New York, we sometimes had dinner together.

In between, we kept in touch, until I got the call I'd been dreading, knowing that Barney's health was failing. He had passed away. I flew to Alaska to say goodbye to one of the kindest men I've ever been privileged to know.

At the graveside, Rachel asked if I wanted to put a traditional shovel of earth on the lowered casket as family and friends do. I did so on behalf of all of their students.

An Alaska newspaper called Barney a great businessman who helped Alaska grow. Everything Barney touched, he helped to grow and thrive. He will be in many hearts forever. May his memory be for a blessing. ■

Barbara

What is Happening... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, in Ethiopia we're helping to keep these Jews alive and improve their health. We're providing funds for nutritious meals for severely malnourished Jewish children and malnourished pregnant Jewish mothers.

A new program, funded by SSEJ (Struggle to Save Ethiopian Jewry), for Jewish after-school education, has begun in Gondar, but the program badly needs a snack for the children.

Can NACOEJ fund a banana and a roll for the hungry children? We really want to, but our budget is already overwhelmed. ■

Congratulations to...

- **Roen Salem**, long-time NACOEJ Board/Advisory Board member, on being honored by Shalhevet High School in Los Angeles for her outstanding work as academic chair of visual and performing arts for over 25 years.
- To NACOEJ Advisory Board member and long-time activist for Ethiopian Jews, **Rabbi Lynn Goldstein** and family, on the marriage of Lynn's daughter, Jenny Goldstein, to Will Prahl.
- **Shmuel Neguise**, PhD, and his family, including his brother, long-time NACOEJ friend, MK Avraham Neguise, on receiving a very prestigious post-doctoral position at the world-famous Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel.

It's Year's End!

Without your support now, we will have to cut back on vital educational programs. Here are ideas that can help NACOEJ's work and help you at the same time.

Take Advantage of the IRA-to-Charity Provision

If you're age 70½ or over – and must withdraw annual required minimum distributions (RMDs) from your IRAs – you can transfer up to \$100,000 annually from your IRAs to qualified charities like NACOEJ. This is a great way to support NACOEJ's work for Ethiopian Jews. Your IRA administrator or trustee must distribute the funds directly to NACOEJ – not to you first – for your gift to be tax-free.

A Woman Unique in Her Time



Beatrice Gindea, z'l, was a very special woman who enjoyed a long and accomplished life. She was the youngest of six siblings, born to Russian immigrants who first settled in Massachusetts and eventually moved to New York.

Ms. Gindea, unique in her time, was highly educated and eventually became a successful college professor, instructing dental hygienists.

Her *raison d'être*, however, was caring for others. She devotedly tended to her elderly parents until their deaths,

and became involved in multiple charitable causes. As a religious woman, many of her pet projects dealt with needy Jews and the needs of the State of Israel.

Donate Appreciated Stock

If you plan to itemize donations, gifts of appreciated stock you've held for over a year are better than cash! You can take a charitable deduction for the stock's fair market value on the day you donate it to NACOEJ. To make a stock donation, please contact Danielle Ben-Jehuda, at 212-233-5200 ext. 227, or donors@nacoej.org.

Her main concern was the care of children and the underprivileged. With the migration of the Ethiopian Jews to Israel, Ms. Gindea saw a cause that demanded her attention.

She was honored, she said in her will, to donate to this very worthwhile cause and hoped that her contribution would make a true difference. Ms. Gindea, was a very special person who dedicated her life to family and charitable causes. May her memory be a blessing. ■

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