



# Limudiah

ANTIDOTE TO FAILURE



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

FALL 2010



NACOEJ Israel Director Shoshana Ben-Dor (standing at left) with staff and pupils at the the Young Authors Project Culmination Celebration at the Ohel Meir school in Kiryat Ekron

## Young Authors Project

On May 31, 2010, children in the NACOEJ *Limudiah* program at the Ohel Meir School in Kiryat Ekron celebrated the culmination of an exciting new program: the Young Authors Project.

The program was established because most Ethiopian-Israeli parents are illiterate, or work long hours, so they don't have time to read to their children – nor is it part of their culture from Ethiopia. This program motivates Ethiopian children to think creatively about story-telling and to have the confidence to put their words on paper.

At the start of the program, *Limudiah* children in all grades at Ohel Meir were asked to write their own books and illustrate them. At first the children doubted they could succeed, but in the end, from first graders up, they produced beautiful, creative, imaginative stories.

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**“It is possible to harvest the fruits...”**

The Sisay family, who arrived in Israel in 1990, is testimony to what can be achieved with dedication, hard work, and a helping hand. Both parents are illiterate, yet they understand the importance of their children's learning and impressed this on them from an early age. NACOEJ made a vital contribution.

There are eight children in this loving and close family. All but the oldest have been involved in NACOEJ educational programs, beginning with the *Limudiah*. Dani, Omer, and Tamar especially demonstrate the importance of *Limudiah* in educational and professional success.

Dani started in our *Limudiah* in 8th grade at the Horev School in Ramla, shortly after the program began. He says: “More even than the hot meals, the *Limudiah* helped us with our homework when our parents couldn't. It enabled us to progress like the other students.”

As an undergraduate, Dani had a NACOEJ/Vidal Sassoon Adopt-A-Student college sponsor. He received his Bachelor's degree in economics and statistics and a Master's degree in business administration. He was a company commander in the Israel Defense Forces and is now a credit officer at Bank Hapoalim. He's now 30 years old and soon to be married.

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## THE LIMUDIAH HELPS ETHIOPIAN-ISRAELI CHILDREN TO SHINE

In response to alarming underachievement among Ethiopian-Israeli elementary school children in the early 1990's, NACOEJ created the *Limudiah*: Intensive After-School Education Program for Ethiopian-Israeli children. The widely-acclaimed program now serves about 800 Ethiopian students annually, including recent immigrants requiring focused, individualized attention.

Operating in 20 schools in eight Israeli cities, the *Limudiah* provides 10-12 weekly hours (from October through June) of intensive after-school academic assistance in reading, Hebrew language, mathematics, and general study skills, as well as enrichment in computers, English, arts and crafts, and music. Teachers are highly innovative in their pedagogic methods and work to maintain a welcoming and stimulating learning environment. The *Limudiah* also provides a daily hot lunch, a necessity for many pupils who come from severely impoverished households.

Since 1982, NACOEJ has been providing humanitarian and educational aid to the Ethiopian Jewish community in Ethiopia and Israel. NACOEJ is a 501c (3) non-profit organization.

# Meet Two of Our Children

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

**SHUKI**, a second-grader. Like many Ethiopian-Israeli children, Shuki has a difficult family life. His family is poor and his mother ill. A lot of responsibility falls on the children. Shuki has time-consuming chores at home, so he often arrives in class unprepared, without books, workbooks, or supplies.

The *Limudiah* has helped him in many ways. First, his teacher takes a close, personal interest in him, providing a lot of attention.

Second, Shuki has been given school books at his personal level, not class level. His *Limudiah* teacher dedicated a lot of time to reading with him. She divided his books into short sections that enabled him to achieve success in small

increments. For math concepts, she used games, puzzles and models that Shuki enjoyed mastering.

When Shuki started at the *Limudiah*, he was at a very low reading level. Today, going into third grade, he reads at fourth grade level, a tremendous accomplishment, and has attained grade level in many subjects. He's a much happier, more accomplished little boy – and he feels like a success!

**NAOR**, a first-grader, lives with his aunt in a small apartment with 12 occupants. He has no privacy, not even a corner in which to do homework, and no one to help him. And he is a weak student to begin with.

To add to his difficulties, Naor has a twin brother who is a naturally good student, and achieves success despite the difficult home conditions. When Naor started the *Limudiah*, he needed a lot of help that he could not get in his crowded regular class.

Initially, Naor would not participate at all in the *Limudiah*. So his *Limudiah* teacher sat him right beside her and explained things to him in detail. She noted that Naor was apt to draw very large letters and then redo everything in dark pencil, making all his schoolwork more difficult. When his teacher helped him form his letters more quickly and legibly, he gained self-confidence.

Now Naor is more attentive, and has significantly improved in reading comprehension and in his ability to follow instructions. He's looking forward to starting second grade.

The positive emotional reinforcement Naor received in the *Limudiah* has helped him overcome his sense of failure. The *Limudiah* -- with its small classes (eight children to one teacher), individual attention, and creative teachers who use a variety of methods and materials -- can build up the confidence, skills, and self-esteem of many immigrant youngsters who, like Naor, need help they can't get at home or in their regular classes.

## Young Authors Project

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The Young Authors Project greatly encourages reading and vocabulary development. It teaches the children about the whole process of creating a book, beginning with the idea, then the writing and editing, learning to divide the contents by pages and illustrate each page, and see how a book is bound.

The project ended with an exciting meeting with famous children's author Datya Ben-Dor, who listened to readings of some of the children's books, treating the children like fellow authors. Datya read some of her own stories and sang some of her songs. Each child received a certificate and a book to take home.

This program showcased the wonder of reading and the beauty of the written word, as well as developing an appreciation for what goes into creating books. It gave the children a great sense of accomplishment. We've found that creative writing greatly encourages Ethiopian-Israeli children to read more and expand their vocabulary, so we're using the Young Authors Project in a number of our *Limudiah* programs. It's highly successful academically – and fun for the children.

## “It is possible...”

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Dani plans to “...progress in the banking world, possibly become a branch manager, department head, and hold a key position.”

Dani's brother Omer is graduating as an optometrist from Hadassah College this year and just became engaged. He describes the *Limudiah* program he attended: “After completing our studies we would go to the *Limudiah* where we would receive a warm meal and then do our homework. The instructors helped us with study materials and enriched us with general knowledge. **Today, I am sure the *Limudiah* had a large part in my success and in my social life. The *Limudiah* served as a framework...supplying support and knowledge.**”

Tamar began in the *Limudiah* in 5th grade. Today she's married, graduating from nursing school, and mother of Elisha. Like Dani and Omer she had AAS sponsorships. She and sister Yisraela, now in the army, also had high school sponsors.

Tamar credits the *Limudiah* with setting her on the road to success: “NACOEJ gave me support that was needed, beginning with

establishing the basics in the *Limudiah*... The basics included help with my studies, homework, what every child needs...The early help influences one's future. I hope donors know it is a sure investment and there is real evidence of its impact. You can see what happens to us. **It is possible to harvest the fruits.**”

The Sisays are one Ethiopian-Israeli family. There are many more who would benefit if they could attend a *Limudiah*.

With the partnership of caring friends like you, we can offer the NACOEJ *Limudiah* to more young Ethiopian-Israelis who will grow up to achieve success because they got the head start they needed when they needed it.

**BELOW: The Sisay Kids – In front on floor: Omer, Leaning back: Moshe, Back, left to right: David, Dani, Yisraela, Tamar, Doron, and Ilan.**



## A PERFECT PARTNERSHIP

Morris and Shirley Trachten – already generous supporters of the NACOEJ/Vidal Sassoon Adopt-A-Student college sponsorship program – were looking for additional ways to help.

They and their daughter, Vicki Trachten Schwartz, and granddaughter, Rebecca Schwartz, had a special interest in empowering young Ethiopian-Israeli women because in traditional Ethiopian society, a woman's status is lower than a man's.

In Israel, Ethiopian Jewish women have demonstrated the ability and desire to become outstanding leaders. But fulfilling their dreams depends very much on the help they receive as young girls. The NACOEJ *Limudiah* program works hard to ensure that girls in the program are well-educated and feel empowered to achieve.

On a recent trip to Israel, Vicki and Rebecca visited the *Limudiah* program in the Noam Hameiri Religious School for Girls. This school is located in the poverty-stricken, crime-ridden city of Lod, where Ethiopian girls are especially at risk for failure.

Shoshana Ben-Dor, NACOEJ Director of Israel Programs, explains: "These girls live in neighborhoods where it's too

easy to be tempted to become involved with criminal elements, especially if you feel like a failure in school. The girls' parents, though supportive, lack formal education and find it difficult to imagine their daughters in highly skilled or educated professions. They can burden them with many household duties, which would have been normal for girls in Ethiopia, but in Israel gives the girls no time to prepare their schoolwork."

During their visit to the school, Vicki and Rebecca met Orit Belay, a young Ethiopian-Israeli woman who was a *Limudiah* graduate from Lod, a NACOEJ Edward G. Victor High School scholarship recipient, and now has a NACOEJ/Vidal Sassoon Adopt-A-Student college sponsor. Orit spoke movingly of how the *Limudiah* program gave her the tools that set her on her path to success.

Afterwards, Vicki and Rebecca visited *Limudiah* classes and saw the program in action. As a result, the Trachtens are partnering with the *Limudiah* program at Noam Hameiri. For the next ten years, their help will provide 50 girls a year with a great opportunity to develop strong self-images, achieve academic success, and be on their way to leadership roles.

Our gratitude goes to the Trachten family for changing the lives of so many young Ethiopian-Israeli girls.



Rebecca Schwartz showing photos of her recent trip to Ethiopia.



Vicki Trachten Schwartz sharing a laugh.

## LEARNING FOR EVERYONE



Parents and children in the Yeshurun School in Rishon LeZion work on baskets of fruit made with edible materials for Shavuot. Basket-making is a traditional craft in Ethiopia. Many Ethiopian-Israeli women are highly skilled in the art, and can teach it to Israelis, to the delight of their children.



Parents and children in the Ramat Alon and Ben Tsvi Schools in Rehovot participate in a pre-Passover Model Seder. Photos: Win Robins

An important aspect of the *Limudiah* is involving and encouraging Ethiopian parents who may never have gone to school themselves, to take ownership of their children's education by seeing what their children are working on, what skills and materials they need to do their schoolwork, and how the classes operate. It also gives parents an opportunity to explain Ethiopian culture. It lets children feel good because their parents understand more about their classwork. And it gives teachers more ability to communicate with parents. **EVERYONE WINS!**

# Three Generations Visit the Limudiah



**FAR LEFT:** Gottstein grandson Joseph Mintz and fiancée Sophie Blankensop playing an educational game with pupils.

**LEFT:** Son Robert Gottstein jokes with delighted girls.

**B**arney and Rachel Gottstein are outstanding supporters of NACOEJ programs, including the NACOEJ/Vidal Sassoon Adopt-A-Student college sponsorship program, the Barney and Rachel Gottstein *Limudiah* Literacy program, and the Barney's Books program for pre-schoolers.

They recently took their children and grandchildren to Israel to visit the people and programs they love. In explaining why they feel it's so important to include their family, Rachel said: "We have heard from some of our [college sponsorship] students that they have been discriminated against, or not accepted as equals. We want to teach our grandchildren that as Jews, if we can do even a little to enable them to be accepted into Israeli society as equals, then that is what we must do."

So it was that Rachel, Barney, three Gottstein children and eight grandchildren came to the *Limudiah* program at the Rambam School in Lod in December 2009.

Rachel and Barney are ambassadors to their family. With today's dire economic climate forcing us to close some existing *Limudiah* programs – and with more schools and children urgently asking NACOEJ to open additional classes – we need all our friends to be ambassadors too.

Please tell your family and friends about the *Limudiah* program and how supporting it can enlarge the future for impoverished Ethiopian-Israelis, making them valuable contributors to Israeli society. **With your help, we will be able to take more at-risk Ethiopian children into this wonderful program. Thank you.**



**Grandchildren Sarah Gottstein & Joshua Faust reviewing lessons.**



**Grandchildren Sam Gottstein & Rebecca Gottstein help a student with her classwork.**



**Grandson Jeffrey Gottstein with two students.**



**Daughter Sandy Gottstein with a student.**

*Photos: Gary Teasdale*

## WHERE WE STAND!

The NACOEJ *Limudiah* presently serves about 800 children in 16 schools in eight Israeli cities.

## WHERE WE WANT TO BE!

We've been asked to expand into higher grades in all schools where we currently work with lower grades. We have requests from four municipalities we already work in to add one more school in each. Other locations are urging us to start helping their Ethiopian children.

**With additional funding, we could open the *Limudiah* in nine more schools. Think of all the children whose lives will be changed for the better if we can. Will you help us achieve this dream?**



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

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