

NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON ETHIOPIAN JEWRY

LIFELINE

WINTER 2011

Out of Poverty – in One Generation?

We recently reported that 72% of Ethiopian children in Israel are living below the poverty line; then along came another study that said that 65% of Ethiopian-Israeli children are living below the poverty line.

That sounds hopeful. “But,” said Shoshana Ben-Dor, our Director of Israel Programs, “the poverty line is set so low that if you are a little above it, you’re still very poor. So the numbers don’t matter so much.”

What does matter is getting up and out of poverty, no matter where the line is.

If you listen to some people, you’ll hear that Ethiopian Israelis are not only poor, but going to be poor for generations to come, caught in what is called a “cycle of poverty”.

But that doesn’t have to be true – and in fact, for Ethiopian Israelis in NACOEJ programs, just the opposite is often true: a lot are making it out of poverty in just one generation!

We have teachers in our *Limudiah* programs who were once pupils in those programs – high school kids headed for good colleges even though their immigrant parents are on welfare or in low-level jobs – college graduates moving directly into professional careers.

Some are, or will be, making a lot of money; some may still need some help with

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Photo: Shmulik Klein

The Battle Over Ethiopian Aliyah Moves to the Streets

On Sunday, November 27, 2011, Ethiopian Israelis marched in protest through the streets of Jerusalem, some of them angry, some in tears, many carrying photos of family members whose aliyah was being delayed – perhaps for years – even though they had been approved to come to Israel.

The barrier to their arrival wasn’t a religious question, family history, or even politics. According to a government committee, headed by the Israeli Ministry of Finance, as of January 1, 2012, there would not be any more room for newcomers in the Jewish Agency’s absorption centers where new immigrants spend their first years.

Why not? Because money the government usually provided to buy immigrants their first apartments had run out, so Ethiopians already in the centers weren’t leaving.

So, the aliyah from Ethiopia had to be cut from 200 a month to 110 a month –

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CONGRATULATIONS TO...

- NACOEJ former Adopt-A-Student, Knesset Member **Shlomo Molla**, on being appointed Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, a great honor to him and the Ethiopian-Israeli community, reflecting Shlomo's years of important work in absorption, directing the Jewish Agency's Ethiopian projects, and now as a prominent Knesset member, committee chairman, and voice of Ethiopian Israelis in the Israeli government. (See a note from Shlomo in a recent NACOEJ mailing.)
- **Rachamim Elazar**, on being named as Israel's next Ambassador to Ethiopia. Rachamim, one of the earliest Ethiopian Jews to reach Israel, has been a prominent leader of the community, a respected journalist, a broadcaster and producer of Amharic radio programs, and an early advocate for the rescue of the community in Ethiopia and for recognition of Jews who suffered as Prisoners of Zion in Ethiopia. He has now become the first Ethiopian Israeli to be named an Ambassador.
- Special NACOEJ friends, **Zelda Stern** and **Blu Greenberg**, on being honored by JOFA, the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Association, for their work to empower girls and women.
- **Lauren Yoked**, former Director of Donor Relations and Special Projects at NACOEJ New York, on her new position as Associate Director of Development for American Friends of Leket Israel – Israel's National Food Bank. We hated to lose Lauren, but we're proud of her continuing commitment to help the poor in Israel.
- **Danielle Ben-Jehuda**, on joining the NACOEJ New York staff, in charge of Foundations and Donor Relations. (She pronounces her name Daniella Ben-Yehuda.) Danielle has a law degree and has worked for a legal defense fund, as well as for non-profit development. We're delighted to have her working with us now.
- NACOEJ volunteer **Karen Gens** on being awarded a New York 2011 Encore Fellowship. Karen is serving her fellowship at HELP/PSI, serving as Marketing Director. And congratulations to us because Karen is still managing to give us one day a week in our New York office!

Caring for the Future Today...

To each of you reading this newsletter, we extend our thanks for your unceasing generosity and compassion. You are the backbone of NACOEJ's ability to assist Ethiopian Jews.

For those Ethiopian Jews who have reached Israel, and for many born in Israel to immigrant parents, your support means the opportunity to achieve the education that will enable them to forge productive futures. It makes it possible for them to become independent, to care for their families, to be the kind of citizens of Israel they want to be.

Together we have achieved so much. But there is still a great deal of work to be done to ensure that this ancient community of Jews, many of whom are still arriving, can fulfill their dreams in modern Israel.

As you continue your generous support of NACOEJ's work today, we ask you to give thought to extending your partnership into the future.

By remembering NACOEJ in your will, you enable Ethiopian Jews who are still on their way to Israel to get educational opportunities when they arrive. You ensure that those already in Israel can achieve their tremendous potential.

A simple instruction in your will naming NACOEJ can change the future for many Ethiopian-Israeli children and families. On their behalf, we offer our profound gratitude.

If you have any questions about specific NACOEJ programs you may wish to designate, or just want to let us know your plans, please contact Danielle Ben-Jehuda at 212-233-5200, ext. 227 or email to dbenjehuda@nacoj.org. If you have legal questions, please consult your attorney, accountant or financial advisor. Thank you so much.

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK!

Join NACOEJ on Facebook and receive news about our programs and updates of immediate interest relating to the Ethiopian-Jewish community.

Go to www.facebook.com and enter NACOEJ in the Search bar to get to our page. Once there, please "Like" us by clicking the LIKE button.

Any questions? Please call Judy Dick at 212-233-5200, ext. 230 or email jdick@nacoj.org.

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LIMUDIAH: Where Learning is Fun!

Limudiah is a voluntary program: the children stay after school because they want to, and of course, their parents want them to, too.

A delicious, nourishing hot lunch is always a motivating factor. So is getting help with homework because in most Ethiopian homes, the parents can't help.

Most important, as the children start to learn successfully in *Limudiah*, they can also enjoy success in their regular classes. But they also like *Limudiah*, because as Esther Kasah says (see box, right) they "do fun stuff".

Our teachers are encouraged to use games, songs, stories, colorful supplies and everything their own creativity suggests to make learning (one-on-one or as a class) fun. Happy children like to learn, and keep coming back for more. And your support of the NACOEJ *Limudiah* program will help us create more and more happy children who love to learn and who will succeed in school, paving the way to bright futures.



From
**Esther Kasah,
Grade 4,
Rambam School,
Lod, Israel**

Hi!

My name is Esther Kasah,
and I am in the NACOEJ
Limudiah in 4th grade in the

Rambam School in Lod. I am very happy that you are teaching us new things, and that you guide us in our studies, and help us pass our tests.

Also, I like the personal attention I get in the *Limudiah*. Sometimes you do fun stuff with us, outside of the classroom, like when we visit the computer room. And I like Sarah, Miri, Revital, our teachers, and Shoshana. It is always great to see her. If you ask me who is the best teacher, I couldn't say because they are all equally good.

Esther

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their children's education – but neither they nor their children will be "cycling poverty".

What makes the difference?

We all know the answer: **education.**

NACOEJ programs in Israel give, enhance, and enable education, and do it effectively.

At a recent Knesset meeting, someone complained that the government doesn't spend enough on Ethiopian absorption.

Knesset member and Deputy Speaker Shlomo Molla, himself an Ethiopian immigrant, responded that the government spends more on Ethiopian absorption than on any other immigrant group, but, said Shlomo, the money is not always well spent; it should be "invested wisely in projects that encourage excellence".

Shlomo understands. He received help from NACOEJ on his way up, and wants other young Ethiopian Israelis to have the benefit of our programs.

That's what we want, too. And this *Lifeline* is full of ways you can help Ethiopian Jews by supporting NACOEJ. Together, we'll help more thousands get up and out of poverty.

Yes, in one generation!

THINGS WE LIKE ABOUT LIMUDIAH CHILDREN IN GEDERA, REHOVOT, RAMLA, AND KIRYAT EKRON



In a Limudiah class, there's time to think through a problem, and someone to help if you get stuck.



In Limudiah, if you give an excited yelp when you get an answer, no one scolds you!



Sometimes help comes from a friend who speaks both of your languages! (Ed. Note: Sarah Getahun, once a junior counselor in our Back-to-School program in Ramla, is now a student-teacher at our Kiryat Ekron Limudiah. Two Ethiopian-Israeli certified teachers are on our staff there, too.)



Sometimes a good buddy gives you a hand!



And in Limudiah, you find out what your parents mean when they talk so wistfully about the "joy of learning".

High School Success Stories



TIGIST BITAU: She Wins Again!

Remember Tigist, the little girl who made big headlines when, in fourth grade, she won a 2.5 km race in which she had mistakenly been put in competition with

much older, bigger girls?

Tigist was in our *Limudiah* after-school educational program in Nes Ziona back then. Now she's a high-schooler in eighth grade and, along with nine Ethiopian-Israeli friends, she's in the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program in the Eliezer Ben-Yehudah High School in the same town.

This past spring, then in seventh grade*, Tigist competed in the national track championships for Israeli schools in the girls' seventh-to-eighth grade group.

Again she won first place, defeating older and stronger competitors from all over Israel!!

Tigist has been called a "sports great" in Israeli newspapers, and was highly praised by athletic trainers at the competition. They say it's vital to do everything to help her develop as a runner, and be a credit to Israel.

Tigist just says: "I get a lot of compliments and my family is proud of me."

What Tigist is proud of is her eight sisters and brothers. "I'm the youngest at home," she says, "and I love it when they come home for weekends and holidays and we have fun."

Seven of the Ethiopian-Israeli youngsters now in the Eliezer Ben-Yehudah High School were in our *Limudiah* program, which gave them a good head start on education. Four were also in our Bar/Bat Mitzvah Twinning program, pairing them with American boys and girls.

*Some Israeli high schools begin in seventh grade.

They're doing well in high school, and they all have high school sponsorships from a NACOEJ sponsor (who prefers to remain anonymous).

Tigist is too appreciative of the help given by this generous sponsor to ask for anything special for herself. But we happen to know she does need something important – the same thing she needed (in a different size!) back in fourth grade – a new pair of running shoes for her rapidly growing feet.

And Herzl Petel, the director of the Nes Ziona Sports Association, tells us that if Tigist is going to realize her great potential, she will need extra support for training.

Would someone like to be Tigist's special "sports sponsor" providing running shoes and/or some extra help for training costs for a little "sports great"? You can follow her career and meet her if you go to Israel. Please see the contact box for Judy Dick on page 6.

Editor's Note: This past November, Ethiopian women took first and second place in the 2011 New York Marathon. One day that may be Tigist crossing the finish line!



ETTI LEIJASHEL: A Tale of Two (or More) Talents

In 2011, 1400 Israelis applied for entry to the Hebrew University's high-ranked dental school. Only 60 were

accepted into the grueling six-year course – and Etti Leijashel, who had been in the NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorship Program as a teenager, was one of them.

It came as no surprise that brilliant Etti was a winner – but it was surprising

that she applied to the Faculty of Dentistry rather than continuing in music.

Music had been her great love as a young girl, and NACOEJ sponsorships had helped her (and her talented younger sister Tzliil) to go to Ashkelon's High School for the Arts. Etti played the piano, sang in a choir that toured internationally, participated in a TV show, and flew to Munich to make records, all while making top grades in physics and other academic subjects.

She once wrote to her high school sponsor, author and "Purple Lady" Barbara Meislin, that, "The security situation in Israel is very bad. Playing helps me to go on and function."

Etti graduated high school with grades that entitled her to go to college immediately, rather than do mandatory military service first, but decided to go into the military instead. "I did this," she explains, "because I didn't feel ready for academic studies. I wanted to complete my army service and learn more about myself."

She served with distinction in the Israel Defense Forces' prestigious intelligence unit, received commendations, and did learn more about herself. "My military service period shaped and changed me. I learned a lot about the importance of maintaining Jewish tradition and the protection of the State of Israel."

After the military, Etti got a high-tech job, but soon applied for dental school. Etti says, "The arts have shaped my personality and caused me to be more intelligent and sensitive to my environment. [But] I have also been very attracted to medicine and health. I knew that I wanted to work in those fields."

As a NACOEJ Adopt-A-Student sponsor, Barbara Meislin will continue to help Etti. Given the serious dental problems Ethiopian Jews experience when exposed to the sugar-rich Israeli diet, Etti's future career could help meet a great community need.

High School Kids Needing Sponsors

Hard Choices

More and more brilliant, talented, extraordinary girls and boys keep showing up in the Ethiopian-Israeli community. We've made hard choices to present just two of their stories, so please remember there are more young people, just as remarkable, needing help. Please become a sponsor.

A VERY SPECIAL FAMILY

Tsega Melaku came to Israel in 1984, an ambitious teenager who knew her mind and was determined to succeed. A NACOEJ/Vidal Sassoon Adopt-A-Student sponsor helped her through Bar-Ilan University. She then earned an MBA from Touro College in Israel, and is now the Director of Israel Radio, Channel 1, the first Ethiopian to hold that position.

Tsega is also a single mom with two extremely bright sons, Immanuel and Yonathan, whose high intelligence calls for a specially good education for both.

With help from NACOEJ/Edward G. Victor High School sponsor Lois Levy, Yonathan has been able to attend a good school and participate in a basketball program for talented players. He plays on the Hapoel Jerusalem Youth Team and fits long practice hours in with his schoolwork.

In high school, with sponsors from our High School program sharing the cost, Yonathan's brother, Immanuel, participated in the Alberto program for gifted students. According

to Yaniv Gabai, Program Coordinator, he was one of the highest achieving students in the program. He now attends the prestigious Hebrew University High School with the help of NACOEJ high school sponsors Richard Adelman and Loren Greenberg.

But Immanuel has medical issues that have kept him out of school for some time. After two years of wearing a brace for scoliosis, this year Immanuel had to have major back surgery.

During his long recovery at home, Immanuel worked hard to keep up. But now he needs to take the course Israelis usually attend to pass the required "Psychometric" college entrance exam. It costs more than his mother can pay, but it is Immanuel's only hope of getting into college now, as he cannot serve in the Army with his back still healing.

With help from NACOEJ sponsors, the Melaku family has achieved great success. Might you be the person to give this family member, a bright star of the future, the helping hand he needs now? Please contact Judy Dick (see the box on page 6).



YONATHAN
MELAKU



IMMANUEL
MELAKU

As mentioned earlier, Immanuel and Bareket aren't the only exceptional Ethiopian-Israeli students who have been accepted to the Hebrew University High School. There are five more: Seniel Radai, Netanel Desta, Salomon Shefferau, Hayele Tegenie, and Binyamin Guremu. They also urgently need sponsors. To sponsor any of these brilliant young people, see the box on page 6 with contact information for Judy Dick.



BAREKET MELEDE: A Most Gifted Young Man

Bareket Melede, a very bright seventh-grader, has also been accepted to the outstanding Hebrew University High School in Jerusalem. It is a tremendous achievement for someone from an immigrant family.

Bareket's parents cannot afford the costs involved.

Bareket was born in Israel in 1999 to Frehot and Satau Melede and lives in Jerusalem with his parents and his twin sisters, Tal and Shachar.

When Bareket began kindergarten, he spoke only Amharic, but he was speaking Hebrew fluently in no time and showing a talent for drawing before first grade. By second grade he was in a special program for very bright children and could choose the classes he wanted. He chose English, math, biology, gym, and computers!

By third grade he was interacting with university students who came to his class to work with the brightest children. In fourth grade he was in a program for gifted children at David Yellin Academic College of Education, taking science and biology.

In fifth grade, Bareket entered the Alberto program for exceptional children, learning biotechnology and chemistry. In his spare time, he was playing soccer, reading extensively and, starting in sixth grade, playing guitar.

This ultra-bright boy, whose future can be brilliant, urgently needs a sponsor now so he can attend the Hebrew University High School where his extraordinary talents will be nurtured. Please see the box on page 6 with contact information.

Adopt-A-Student Success Stories



Photo: Tel Aviv University Development and Public Affairs Division Photography Department

A SINGULAR HONOR

YEHUDIT KABADA is a bright, ambitious law student at Tel Aviv University and a recipient of a NACOEJ/Vidal Sassoon Adopt-A-Student stipend from Alan Sieroty.

She is also the first person in her extended family to study for a university degree.

Recently, Yehudit had the honor of speaking on behalf of Ethiopian-Israeli students at the unveiling of a monument on the Tel Aviv University campus. Created by sculptor Ron Arad, the monument memorializes thousands of Ethiopian Jews who set out for Israel but never arrived.

Yehudit's grandfather was one of those. He and Yehudit's grandmother left Ethiopia in 1984. As Yehudit said in her speech: "They left their home... for the dream of walking in the streets of Jerusalem. My grandfather was 75 when they departed and he managed to get across the desert, but died in a refugee camp in Sudan. The sculpture honors his memory and the memory of others who died along the way."

Yehudit's parents also left Ethiopia in 1984, a year of famine. They married in Israel, where Yehudit, the oldest of seven children, was born. The parents had to cut short their *ulpan* (Hebrew language) studies to support their growing family. After serving in the army, her father found work as a forklift operator, and her mother cared for the children, also taking jobs whenever possible.

Yehudit is a committed young woman who did National Service as a volunteer in a daycare program for immigrant children with language, emotional, and social problems. In the afternoons she volunteered with needy children in their homes. Far from complaining about the emotionally draining effort, she says: "This was a very enjoyable period from which I got a lot of personal satisfaction."

Now on track to become a lawyer, Yehudit is truly a shining example of Ethiopian-Israeli young people making the leap in one generation from their parents' traditional rural life in Ethiopia to academic success in modern, high-tech Israel. And, like many others, she is doing so with the essential help of the NACOEJ/Vidal Sassoon Adopt-A-Student program.

We offer Yehudit our heartfelt congratulations on representing Ethiopian-Jewish students at the memorial dedication, and we look forward to her successful future as an attorney.

THE ASSEGIES: A Family Affair

BINYAMIN GENETU ASSEGIE was born in northwestern Ethiopia. As a child, he was a shepherd and helped his parents in the fields. But they saw that he was exceptional, and made sacrifices to get him an education.

At 12 Binyamin began elementary school an hour's hike away from his village. Later he went to the nearest high school – 93 miles from his family. He then went on to the Gondar College of Medical and Public Health Sciences.

In 1997 Binyamin and his wife Yekebe made aliyah together, and Binyamin earned a teaching certificate at the David Yellin Academic College of Education.

Binyamin and Yekebe have two daughters, **RACHEL** and **YERUSHALEM**. Both girls have their sights set on productive futures. Rachel, who loves animals, wants to be a veterinarian. Yerushalem, who just



YERUSHALEM ASSEGIE



RACHEL ASSEGIE

BINYAMIN GENETU ASSEGIE

finished high school and is in the army, is fascinated by languages. She already speaks Amharic, Hebrew and English.

To help the family cover the costs of good education, both Rachel and Yerushalem have had NACOEJ High School sponsors, Ken and Ruth Wallis.

Not long ago, Binyamin set his sights higher, enrolling in a prestigious nursing degree program at the Hadassah Hospital School. With the help of NACOEJ AAS sponsor Robert Gutman, he graduated this past summer and has begun work as a nurse at Shaarey Tzedek Hospital in the Geriatric Department.

Binyamin is "so very grateful" that NACOEJ has helped him and his family. For this hardworking father and his two daughters, NACOEJ sponsorships have been essential to their progress toward successful futures and financial independence.

YOU CAN CHANGE A YOUNG PERSON'S LIFE

To sponsor any of the young people featured in this issue of *Lifeline*, or other equally deserving Ethiopian Israelis in high school or college, please contact Judy Dick at highschool@nacoelj.org or college@nacoelj.org, or call 212-233-5200, ext. 230.

Please refer to the *Lifeline* when you contact Judy. **THANK YOU!**

AAS Students Needing Sponsors



Natan, his wife Hodaya, and son Shilo with Shoshana Ben-Dor (at right), NACOEJ Israel Director, in the NACOEJ Sigd tent where Shoshana teaches Ethiopian liturgy.

NATAN DASTA: Growing Up with NACOEJ

The good-looking young man with the big smile in this photo has literally grown up with NACOEJ.

NATAN DASTA, like his older sister Ashegaru, came to us while still a child in Ramla. In NACOEJ's *Limudiah* program, Natan stood out as bright, sociable, with every sign of leadership abilities – and an extraordinary aptitude for picking up the general knowledge which so many Ethiopian immigrant children lack, and which our *Limudiah* program works hard to supply.



Judy Dick, Director of Educational Programs, NACOEJ-New York with Vered Wuvshet, a student in Pharmacy at Ben-Gurion University who is sponsored by Barney and Rachel Gottstein.

After elementary school, Natan had his pick of local high schools because his grades were so good. He chose a very demanding one with the high academic standards he wanted.

Then Natan, already "giving back" to his community, volunteered to serve as a junior counselor to younger children in NACOEJ's Peachy Levy Back-To-School summer educational day camp. The kids loved him.

When Natan, who is religiously observant, graduated from high school, he spent a year and a half studying in a top-flight yeshiva before entering the

Israel Defense Forces in the high-risk Golani Brigade as a combat soldier.

It's often hard to keep track of our students during their years of army service, so when our Israel Director, Shoshana Ben-Dor, heard that Natan Dasta was on the office phone, asking for an AAS sponsor to help him through medical school at Hebrew University, she was ecstatic – first to know that Natan was safe and sound, second that he had been accepted into a very selective program at a top-ranked university – and also because, like the devoted family member he is, he was coming to NACOEJ for the helping hand he needed.

Natan is married (he describes his wife, Hodaya, as "the most wonderful woman in the world") and has a one-and-a-half-year-old son, Shilo. Like most of our medical students who are married with children, Natan really needs two sponsors to help the family survive. We have one splendid sponsor for Natan, and we're eager to find an equally splendid partner-sponsor. To establish a beautiful relationship with this terrific family, please see the box on page 6.

Editor's note: We have written before about Natan's sister Ashegaru, who also grew up with NACOEJ. To update you, Ashegaru has graduated as a registered nurse from Shaarey Zedek Hospital with the help of an AAS sponsor. We do treasure this family, all of whom "give back".



**AVIV GETAHUN:
An Asset to Israel**

AVIV GETAHUN knows why Israel needs Ethiopian-Israeli social workers. With a little help from her friends at NACOEJ, she intends to become one, and help other immigrants through the difficulties she knows personally.

Aviv was born in Ethiopia 22 years ago, and spent four of those years in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, waiting with her family for permission to leave for Israel. Young as she was then, she still remembers those years. "Hard. Poverty, persecution and alienation plagued us," she says, "but we were determined to make aliyah – and made it!"

The family started their new life in Israel in an absorption center in Haifa. Eighteen months later they moved to an apartment in the city, with the usual help from a government mortgage program.

Aviv had language difficulties in elementary school, but by high school was able to work as a teacher's assistant in a program for preschoolers. She graduated high school with full matriculation and did National Service in a hospital and as a camp counselor.

Now at Haifa University, she wants to qualify for admission to the Faculty of Social Work so that she can turn her own experiences into a career of helping immigrants with all the professional skills and knowledge she can absorb.

If you would like to provide a modest stipend that will help this loving young woman get her degree, please consider sponsoring her. (See the box on page 6 for contact information.)

Editor's note: Those "hard" years in Addis Ababa are also fresh in our memory at NACOEJ, as we were there too, doing everything in our power to assist the struggling community to survive and live in dignity until they could leave for Israel. Social workers who remember those days, speak Amharic as well as Hebrew, and know first-hand the difficulties of absorption for Ethiopian immigrants, are an asset to Israel.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

A lot, if it's on a NACOEJ program.

Naming a NACOEJ program in Israel is a beautiful way to honor family, friends, or departed ones, or to perpetuate your own name as one who cares about fellow Jews in the Promised Land. We are proud to list the following named programs assisting Ethiopian Jews in Israel:

- **Vidal Sassoon Adopt-A-Student**
(college sponsorships)
- **Vidal Sassoon Soccer**
(middle/high school soccer)
- **Edward G. Victor High School Sponsorships**
- **Rachel and Barney Gottstein Limudiah Literacy**
- **Barney's Books**
(for AAS students to read to pre-schoolers at home)
- **Morris and Sylvia Trachten Girls' Empowerment**
(HaMeiri School, Lod)
- **Peachy Levy Back-to-School**
(summer educational day camp)
- **Teichman Family Limudiah Class**
(following one class as they progress, Yeshurun School, Rishon LeTzion)

New naming opportunities available (see reply card for two of them):

- *Limudiah* School Lunch
- *Limudiah* Schools/Classes
- Bar/Bat Mitzvah Twinning

To discuss, please contact Danielle Ben-Jehuda at 212-233-5200, ext. 227 or email dbenjehuda@nacoej.org.

BATTLE | CONT. FROM PAGE 1

or even stopped altogether. On October 1, 2011, the rate of aliyah was indeed reduced. If the lower rate continues, it would add at least an extra year onto the three-year aliyah the government, the Agency, and NACOEJ had agreed to back in 2010.

But according to some Jewish Agency officials, in fact there would be many hundreds of beds available on January 1, 2012, certainly enough to continue the aliyah at a rate of 200 a month for many months. And indisputably, many beds were available on October 1, 2011, the date the aliyah was reduced.

So why has the aliyah rate been cut? Honestly, we don't know. An even better question is why the aliyah rate is not being increased to the rate of 300 per month, the rate which prevailed for almost a decade in the past. At that rate, certainly sustainable, all of the Jews would be out in a year.

We have been told that the Jewish Agency Board has passed a resolution that the aliyah should be completed on schedule – in three years, not four – which would be impossible at 110 a month.

So the battle goes on, while thousands of Ethiopian Jews, fully approved and longing to join their families in Israel, live in fear and uncertainty in mud huts in Gondar, while the months roll by, famine stalks some regions of their country, and the next rainy season and the malaria season that follows, lie ahead.

Mitzvah Projects!

Have a Bar or Bat Mitzvah coming up? Or an engagement, wedding, or any other life cycle event? A wonderful way to celebrate is to establish a special Mitzvah Project on the NACOEJ web site and help Ethiopian Jews achieve successful futures.

Just go to www.nacoej.org and click on Mitzvah Projects in the top right hand corner. Or call Judy Dick at 212-233-5200, ext. 230 or email mitzvah@nacoej.org. You can create your own custom project on-line at no charge and see your thermometer go up as gifts come in!

CONDOLENCES TO...

- NACOEJ Advisory Board member **Marsha Croland**, and Marsha's mother Jeanne Croland, on the loss of Robert Croland, Marsha's dear brother, Jeanne's beloved son. The Croland family have been dear friends and supporters to NACOEJ and the Ethiopian-Jewish community for many years, and established the first Ethiopian synagogue in Israel, in Beer Sheva, through NACOEJ. Our hearts are with the whole Croland family.
- UJA-Federation of New York President **John Ruskey** on the loss of his beloved mother, Edith Neidenberg. John's compassion and support for Ethiopian-Jewish families has warmed our hearts, and now our hearts go out to him, wife Robin, and the whole family.
- **The family, friends, colleagues, and students of Dr. Howard M. Lenhoff**, and especially to the Ethiopian-Jewish community, at the loss of a most devoted friend. Howard Lenhoff, in addition to his extraordinary achievements in science, music, and scholarship, was a leader in the American Association for Ethiopian Jews. He considered the rescue of Ethiopian Jews as one of his greatest joys. We extend our warm sympathy to Howard's wife Sylvia, daughter Gloria, and son Bernard.
- **The family of Hanan Porat**, a Knesset member and strong and compassionate supporter of Ethiopian Jews and their aliyah. Our hearts go out to his wife, children, and grandchildren.

Sefer Torahs Wanted

Sefer Torahs are needed in Israel for Ethiopian congregations. To make arrangements, contact NACOEJ past-Vice President Sanford Goldhaber at goldhabers@gmail.com or staffer Danielle Ben-Jehuda at 212-233-5200, ext. 227 or email dbenjehuda@nacoej.org. Thank you so much.