

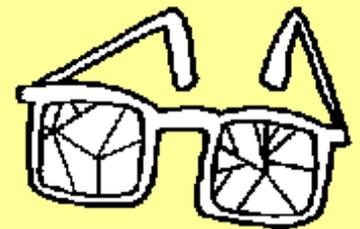
Rosh HaShana Newsletter

תשרי תשע"ו
September 2015



With glasses like these, could you see what the future holds in store ?

Kelala A., a new immigrant at the Meron Absorption Center in Safed, has extremely poor sight (minus 12 !). A single mother with two young children, she earns whatever she can from occasional jobs. But when she broke her glasses, which she had brought from Ethiopia, she was left almost blind.



Ms. Orii Harel, the Absorption Center social worker, wrote to ask if we could help. The estimate for **new glasses** was \$581; the Absorption Center could contribute \$211. At the time (the end of July this year), our resources were in very poor shape – they aren't much better now ! – so we wrote that we could only contribute **\$106**, and apologized that we could not make it more.

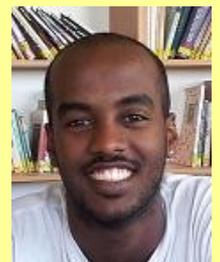
For all that, Ms. Harel wrote: *"Many, many thanks. I can't find words to express our gratitude. This sum will really help."*

We have to plan ahead and manage with what we have !



For example, **every month** we lay aside **\$65** (\$780 for 12 months), being 50% of the fees for Shoshi M.'s **Medical Secretary course** at our local College. Shoshi and her husband both work, but the extra school fees that they have to pay for their three children (in common with all parents, but for which they don't ask any help) make a heavy inroad on their finances. Once she qualifies, we are sure it will open up many employment prospects for her in the area. [The photo is illustrative, the secretary is not Shoshi.]

Similarly we have been paying about **\$110 a month**, for 10 months, to Kobi A. (as described in the [July 2014 Newsletter](#)), to help him **rent an apartment** at the [Oranim College](#). At the end of the academic year, he wrote us a very appreciative letter, amongst other things describing what wonderful new intellectual experiences he had enjoyed, the challenges he had overcome, the friends he had made, but most important, he wrote what he and a group of other concerned students had decided to do in light of the the "[Ethiopian protests](#)" in Tel Aviv: to develop educational programs to advance disadvantaged youth, and get them into the main-stream of Israeli society. As we wrote back: **the only way that Israeli Ethiopian Jews are going to achieve integration is if leaders like Kobi take the initiative** – and if our help has made some small contribution, that is exactly what our Committee has been trying to do over the years.



"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." (Benjamin Franklin)

At the beginning of the school year, the counselor at the [Menahem Begin High School](#) (right), Mrs. Yael Ben-Abo, turned to us very concerned about Gadi, an 11th grade boy. He seemed very disconnected socially and academically, and in view of his known emotional problems, she wanted to provide him with support.



The school drop-out rate among Ethiopian Israeli students is higher than among veteran Israelis (2012), though declining. The percentage of at-risk students within the Ethiopian Israeli community is particularly high and the percentage of students that complete their high school matriculation exams is low.

At Mrs. Ben-Abo's request we paid one of the staff, Ms. Ortal B., a total of **\$3000** spread over the whole academic year, to sit with Gadi daily for a couple of school hours, on a 1:1 basis, both to help him with his school work and also to try to help him cope with his other problems, so that he would be able to fully integrate into school life, and not become a drop-out. Below is a translation of a letter recently received from the school principal.

The Menahem Begin Comprehensive High School, Safed

The Committee for Ethiopian Jews in Safed
Anilewicz 5
Safed
2015

July 7th

Greetings !

Re: Gadi B., a student in the Menahem Begin Comprehensive High School, Safed

Gadi B. is a student in our school, in a class which aims for a full Bagrut [*national matriculation certificate*].

During his years in the school, the educational staff realized that in spite of Gadi's high motivation and desire to succeed, there were great gaps in his studies and serious problems with everything connected with the learning process, which prevented him from keeping up with the rest of the class and achieving academic success.

Gadi was at risk from dropping out of the class, and dropping out of school altogether !

It is true that he is in the OMETZ class, in which the state has invested large sums of money to pay for an extra teacher to help the students, modular studies for each subject, etc. In spite of the resources that this class devotes to the pupils, Gadi still could not keep up. It was clear that he needed other extra support that the school could not provide.

We turned to Dr. Yehoshua Sivan and, through **The Committee for Ethiopian Jews in Safed**, he agreed to help Gadi. They enabled us to provide him with a personal coach for the whole school year and during the period of the Bagrut examinations.

Today we are in the situation that Gadi has successfully completed 11th Grade, and behind him are the Bagrut exams in Bible, Civics, English, Mathematics, Language and Communications. He feels wonderful, his self-confidence has increased, he goes around in school with hope for the future ! He has also started to be socially involved.

We just had a call from the school asking if we could continue supporting Gadi ... ~~no funds available at present!~~ Since writing that we have been informed a) that Gadi passed all his exams & b) that a very generous donor will pay for continued support !

Social integration also costs money.

Before Pesah we received a request to help a student at the [Yeshiva High School in Hispin](#), whose family lives in one of the Safed Absorption Centers. Sten W. wanted to **join his classmates** on an [educational trip to Poland](#), which would cost each boy \$1520. The Ministry of Education was prepared to give him a \$1050 subsidy, leaving his family to find \$470. This was still beyond their means, so we agreed to give **\$390**, with the family paying \$80.

Like all the current new immigrants, Sten was a member of the "[Falash Mura](#)" community, who have returned to Judaism on coming to Israel. For that reason it was so important for Sten to identify with the Jewish people, whether in Israel or with those who once lived and then were murdered in Europe.

Below is a letter from Sten and a photo of the group next to a memorial to the martyrs. Sten is sitting in front of the flag, bottom row. Over and above the strengthening of his Jewish identity, the trip made a great difference to his social absorption.

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To the kind donors,

I want to thank you for the help you gave me. Although you don't know me, you decided to help me make the trip to Poland.

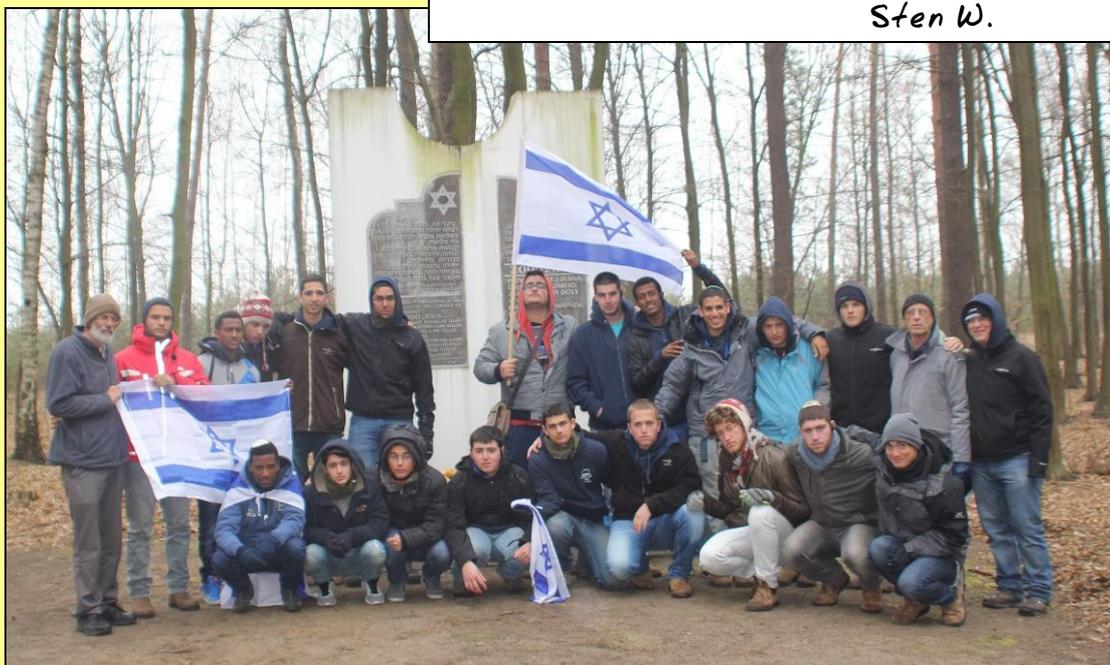
It was very important for me to go, so that I could learn, see and experience what happened during the Holocaust. I know that this is an important part of the history of Am Yisrael, and I want to be part of our people.

I was worried that I would not have enough money to go on the trip, but thanks to your donation I can now relax.

I want to wish you every success in the future, and that you should always be able to help other people.

Many, many thanks,

Sten W.



Social-emotional therapy :

As described [elsewhere](#), "Ethiopian Jewry's absorption into Israeli society has faced many challenges, in addition to the unrecognized and unaddressed trauma they underwent.... one of the most tragic effects of the immigration process has been the breakdown of the family unit in addition to high rates of domestic violence, suicide, unemployment and poverty". One of the Absorption Centers in Safed approached us to help pay for **social-emotional therapy** for three young people:

1. D.A. had great emotional and social problems in adjusting to the learning framework of First Grade. In view of his difficulties he received a series of social-emotional therapy sessions from Mrs. Pamela Mond (right), at the Absorption Center, and paid for by the Jewish Agency. After 10 sessions both the school and the informal education staff of the Absorption Centre reported a marked improvement in his social and emotional behavior. In view of this positive outcome, the school recommended a further 6 therapy sessions, costing **\$425**. The Jewish Agency didn't have funds to continue the treatment, and our Committee undertook to pay. 
2. M.D. is a 15 year-old girl who had been in Israel only two months. She needed therapeutic support due to her behavioral and social problems in adapting to school and to her peers. In light of a crisis in the school, her readmittance was made conditional to her receiving supportive emotional therapy. The Jewish Agency funded 6 sessions, through the Absorption Center, and the Center asked us to pay for a further six (**\$425**), which we agreed to do.
3. The 14 year-old youngest child of elderly parents, T.M. was in urgent need of social-emotional therapy to help her cope with significant learning, social and emotional problems. Again, the Absorption Centre will pay for 6 sessions, and we have agreed to pay for a further six (**\$425**).

We should add that this form of therapy, given on a 1:1 basis, is needed when these and other young people are in a crisis situation, resulting from the trauma of immigration and absorption into a totally different society, which causes extreme pressure in the family, and neither they nor their parents know how to cope. The therapy gives them confidence to learn to manage an overwhelming situation; furthermore, the cases with which we are involved are not eligible for help from the municipal social services, education or mental health departments.



Dental treatment :

In the first eight months of 2015, we've spent **over \$5400** on dental treatment for **seven adults**. As we seem to report year after year, this makes up a significant part of our annual expenditure. While children's dental needs are now covered by insurance, this does not apply to adults, whether young or old. There are other organizations which devote themselves to this issue, but they seem to be mainly in the Jerusalem area. One of them [writes](#):

"HCS seeks to meet a real and underestimated need in Israel. Cavities and tooth decay are prevalent problems, especially among disadvantaged families who simply find the cost of private dental care an unaffordable luxury. According to the Mayo Clinic, loss of self-esteem can result from broken teeth, tooth loss, closure alignment, or other visible problems while cavities and tooth decay ... can lead to chewing problems, pain that interferes with the ability to concentrate in school, and serious infections. Moreover, a 2008 study conducted by dentists affiliated with the Hebrew University - Hadassah School of Dental Medicine showed that new Ethiopian immigrants had suffered from a decline of their oral health status since their arrival in Israel. The results suggest an immediate need for dental intervention among this population."

USA donors

- can send a check to P.E.F. using [the form below](#) (this way there are no commissions or charges), *or*
- can make an on-line donation at [Israel Gives](#).

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- can make an on-line donation at [Israel Gives](#).

We are very anxious to widen our list of supporters, so if you have family, friends or acquaintances who you think would like to share in this great *mizva*, then **please recruit them !** Similarly, if you know of synagogue or community funds which might be available, please let us know and we will apply to the trustees.

Our e-mail address is ysivan@hotmail.com – what is yours ?

We are trying to cut down on overheads by sending our Newsletters and other information online – please help us !

This form can be printed out separately:

To: P.E.F. Israel Endowment Funds, Inc.
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Enclosed is my contribution of \$ _____* with a recommendation to your trustees that it be used for **The Committee for Ethiopian Jews in Safed, Anilewicz 5, 13400 Safed, Israel.**

* Gifts are US tax deductible if of at least \$25 and made payable to **P.E.F. Israel Endowment Funds, Inc.**

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